

Tradition and Modernity

Cultural Continuum and Transition among Tibetans in Amdo

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this ethnographic study is to describe and analyze how various aspects of Tibetan culture in the region of Amdo (northeastern Tibet) have changed since the 1950s. The study is unique because of my perspective as a native *Amdoba* who has received a western education.

Experience from Amdo confirms that political events locally or elsewhere can profoundly change a population's culture. Whenever a significant change in culture occurs, the affected population must reexamine who they are, who they would like to become, and where they would like to go. I have chosen to use a qualitative approach in order to produce a rich description of the social and cultural phenomena of Amdo. I use this qualitative approach as a way of gaining insight into Tibetan culture through the discovery of the cultural significance behind such seemingly mundane things such as kinship and marriage, food, clothing, and shelter.

The research also presents an extensive discourse on the New Thinkers, a group of intellectuals who advocate discarding traditional Tibetan culture and adopting a more modern one. An ideological battle is currently brewing among Tibetans in Amdo. This battle is being waged not only for the physical place called Tibet but also for the hearts and minds of ethnic Tibetans. All Tibetans must answer for themselves the question of who they are as Tibetans.

Tibetans in Amdo have interacted with other ethnic groups for many centuries, and this has strengthened their ability to survive even under external threat to their culture. Since the 1980s, Tibetans living in Amdo have adopted modern clothing, diet, and housing. At the same time, many features of Tibet's traditional culture, such as their kinship terms and marriage customs continue to survive.

This thesis presents the first general outline of the cultural and ethnic changes that are taking place among the Tibetans of Amdo.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CMA Christian Missionary Alliance
CPC Communist Party of China
CCP Chinese Communist Party
DVD Digital Video Disc
E.g. *exemplī grātiā*
Etc *et cetera*
Et al. *et alii*
PRC People’s Republic of China
TAC Tibetan Autonomous County
TAP Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
TAR Tibetan Autonomous Region

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INTRODUCTION

In a word, this research examines traditional and modern elements and the processes of cultural adaptation among Tibetans in Amdo.

I am a native of Amdo, and I spent my childhood in the countryside where I helped my mother take care of yaks until I enrolled in a primary school at G.yu sgang town. Modern education in China has changed the lives of many people, including myself. I am still amazed to this day that my parents found a way to send all nine of their surviving children to school. In addition to obtaining a university education, I have also been fortunate in being able to attend graduate school in the United States and in Finland.

I believe that I must give back what I have received, and I have always wanted to help my people improve their economic and social conditions. It has also been my desire to do that while working to preserve Tibet's traditional culture and values.

While I was in graduate school at SIT Graduate Institute (SIT) in the United States, I learned that it is difficult to bring development to a region without knowing that region's culture and values. We have all heard and read horror stories of how indigenous societies were destroyed as other civilizations colonized them. We have also heard and read horror stories of how the native cultures in various regions of the world have been destroyed by those only wanting to "do good" by helping the population in question. Development experts have shown that, even if you have the best intentions, if your assistance destroys a population's culture, you may as well destroy the population.

This is one of the primary reasons why Tibetans are so concerned about preserving their culture at all costs. Although the Chinese have brought infrastructure and technology to Tibet, Tibetans still feel that something is missing. Today we can find a kind of prosperity in material development in Tibet, but we also seem to have a lack of cultural spirit. Today's Tibetans are often more concerned about money than they are about *ma ni*¹. An American friend once lamented to me that while she thinks it is great that many exiled Tibetan religious leaders have introduced the world to Tibetan Buddhism, it is regrettable that few Americans understand that Tibetan culture is much, much deeper than its religion.

As a beneficiary of Tibetan, Chinese, and western education, I am in a unique position to understand how modernization benefits, and also harms, Tibetans. Many Tibetans in Tibet today are illiterate. Many Tibetans in Tibet live in homes without electricity or modern plumbing. Many of them have never heard of the Internet. I have

¹ This is the short version of Tibetan six-syllabled holy words or mantra: Om ma ni pad me hung. This mantra particularly associated with the four-armed Shadakshari form of Avalokiteshvara (Tibetan: *spyan ris gzigs*), the bodhisattva of compassion. It is commonly carved onto rocks and printed on prayer flags. It is written on paper, which is then inserted into prayer wheels.

also known Tibetans who have enjoyed the benefits of modern life. The cell phone has significantly changed the courtship behavior of many young Tibetans. Modern Tibetans use cars and motorcycles when they go on pilgrimages.



Figure 1. Administrative Divisions of the People's Republic of China (PRC)

In the last 60 years, Tibetans in Amdo have faced many challenges to preserving their culture and improving their living conditions. Ordinary Tibetan men and women, Tibetan scholars, monks, Chinese officials and intellectuals, and international researchers and activists, have all paid close attention to what is happening to Tibetan culture in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). They have not paid as much attention to Tibetan culture in Amdo, although they have begun to do so now. To date, there is no significant research that specifically and holistically studies social and cultural adaptation in Amdo.

This is true in spite of the fact that many Chinese, Tibetan, and international researchers have been studying the region since the early 1900s.

This study is intended to fill a small part of this very wide knowledge gap. My dream of writing something about Tibetan culture in Amdo began when one of my American English teachers encouraged me to write my autobiography in English. I started to write it, but then I decided that my life story is “just a single hair in a huge butter package,” to use a Tibetan saying. I decided it would be more meaningful to present a native perspective on Tibetan culture in Amdo through the views of the research participants and my own experience.

As an Amdoba, or a person from Amdo, I was able to travel freely in Amdo to interview people and collect data. My personal experience, language skills, and social network strongly supported my efforts and brought numerous benefits to the research.

There were also many challenges to being a native conducting research in my own community. It is a given that a researcher may have a strong bias when studying his or her own culture. The researcher may not see some common elements of the culture because he or she is too familiar with them. This fact puts the researcher at risk of ignoring important information. To overcome these problems researcher must be familiar with research methods and theories in order to design a good research plan. Research questions often assist the researcher in focusing the data collection and in defining the boundaries of the research. A well-designed research plan often makes the research go more smoothly as well. The research theories are useful when a native researcher tries to transform the voice of the local participants (the emic view) into a foreign academic form (the etic view).

Obviously, my learning of research techniques and theories at the University of Helsinki along with my independent study of research techniques profoundly affected the plan and result of my research. I undertake my research as a qualitative study with an interpretive goal, which “typically tries to understand the social world as it is (the status quo) from the perspective of individual experience, hence an interest in subjective worldview” (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p.46). The goal of this paradigm is to generate a “thick description” (Geertz, 1983) of the participants’ worldviews rather than to make predictions, because with prediction likely comes social control.

This research focuses on several categories of Tibetan culture in Amdo, and I consider this study to be an ethnography. As Rossman and Rallis (2003) point out, “ethnographies look at social groups or culture” (p. 92).

Amdo, located on the northeastern Tibetan Plateau, is a historical and geographical Tibetan term, and it indicates one of three historical Tibetan regions: Dbus gtsang (Utsang), Khams and Amdo. Huber (2002) argues, “[t]here is not, and there has never been, a single or discrete A mdo [Amdo] in time and space ” (p.xiii). I will discuss the meaning of the term Amdo in detail in Chapter one of Part I.

Culture is another key concept of this research, and there are many interpretations of the term “culture” in academic circles. Rossman and Rallis (2003) agree with Rossman, Corbett, and Firestone’s (1988) interpretation of culture in that, “Central to ethnographic work is the concept of culture – a vague and complex term that describes the way things are and prescribes the ways people should act; it thus determines what is good and true”(p. 95). In other words, culture is the way of life in which a person gains his or her worldview, identity, and sense of meaning in life.

Tibetans in Amdo, like Tibetans in other regions, certainly share the core beliefs and values of Buddhism, and the philosophy of Buddhism directs their actions and their understandings of those actions, though the New Thinkers have challenged the authority of traditional religion since the end of the 20th century.

This study surveyed a cultural group of Tibetans in Amdo through participant observation. Other data-gathering techniques, including formal and informal interviews, interpretation of artifacts, document review and analysis, and my own experience of events and processes, are also applied to this research. A detailed description of patterns and principles guide the analysis of data. This study was completed over a period of five years and explores social structure (kinship and marriage), material culture (food, clothing and shelter), and the new ideology (New Thinkers) in Amdo. To deeply understand these cultural components my research questions have been designed to guide the research.

Research Questions

Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggest that, “Stipulating general overview – grand tour – questions and related sub-questions are especially useful for delimiting the study” (p.131). The primary research question and refining sub-questions for this research are:

- How might the process of cultural transition among Tibetans in Amdo be described and interpreted?
 - How do kinship terms indicate the genuine Tibetan culture of Amdo?
 - How does the Tibetan kinship system affect the marriage structure?
 - What marriage traditions are practiced by Amdobas?
 - What is the status quo of the material culture (food, clothing and shelter) of Tibetans in Amdo?
 - What is the ideologic shift of Tibetans in Amdo?

The nature of these questions categorizes different facets of culture, which is the target of this research. These categories are not only useful for collecting data, but also provide a framework for analyzing the data.

I structured my research questions using western research techniques and terms before I entered the field. While in the field, I noticed that my use of academic jargon created some confusion with my interview subjects. I found it wise to convert jargon into

common language in order to interview the research participants and discuss culture with people in the field.

No research study is perfect. The findings of this research are tentative and conditional. My claims in this research are humble because this research field has extraordinary complexity. There were many topics that I could not discuss with my research subjects on account of political sensitivity.

Conceptual Framework

No population's culture stands completely still. Cultural changes occur because of sudden events (the events of September 11th, 2001 in the United States) or because of more gradual changes (e.g. migration, environmental changes). Political events locally or elsewhere can profoundly change a population's culture. Whenever there is a significant change in culture, the affected population must reexamine who it is, who it would like to become, and where it would like to go.

Many Tibetans are proud of their rich cultural, historical and religious traditions / heritage; others are unsatisfied with the current situation and blame their religion for holding them back. However, all Tibetans must think about the future for the sake of their identity and culture. Tibetans are in the psychological and emotional position of having to reassess who they are as Tibetans and who they would like to become as Tibetans.

There is no question that Tibet's culture has changed, both as a result of slow evolution and as a result of more rapid changes. The Chinese Cultural Revolution rapidly brought certain changes to the area, and some of those changes were brought by force. Despite its isolation, globalization has also brought cultural changes to Tibet, though more slowly. More migration by the Han Chinese and other groups, and more tourism to the region have exposed Tibetans to people and cultures that are very different from their own. All of these exposures have changed Tibet and Tibetans forever.

Whether these changes are good or bad for Tibetans is not a matter of discussion or debate. The fact of the matter is that the cultural changes have occurred. Now that they have, Tibetans must observe those changes, learn from them, and determine, as a people, where they would like to go.

There is a strong sentiment among Tibetans, in Tibet and abroad, to preserve their traditional culture, which includes their religion, their language, their material culture (food, clothing, and shelter), their marriage rituals, and their ideological values. In order to preserve Tibet's traditional culture and enable Tibet's culture to modernize in a balanced way, we must study how it has changed. While it is true that Tibetans must preserve their traditional culture in order to preserve their identity, they must also adapt to modern times. Many Tibetans, myself included, believe that both can and should occur.

The result of this research is a detailed description of Tibetan traditional and modern lifestyles, behaviors, and ideas in Amdo. Tibetans who live in this region have faced

serious challenges to protecting their traditional culture from modernization, urbanization, globalization, new technology, development, government policies, and Tibetan nationalism. These internal and external factors force Tibetans to adapt to new situations accordingly and accept the market economy system widely. With that said, traditional Tibetan culture still strongly controls their minds, and religion plays a major role in maintaining traditional norms and values.

This study of the integration of Tibetan culture in Amdo into general Tibetan studies could be significant for both academics and practitioners. In general, researchers focus on the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and ignore Tibetan culture in Amdo. A few even argue that Amdo Tibetans (called Amdobas) are not real Tibetans and that they have a different culture from people living in the TAR. This research reveals that Amdo Tibetans struggle to preserve Tibetan tradition, while at the same time attempting to adopt modern lifestyles and attitudes. I think it is necessary to examine Tibetan culture from different aspects and to understand it holistically and comprehensively.

Amdo is just one part of Tibet, and Tibetans in Amdo have interacted with other nations for many centuries in order to strengthen their survival skills and adapt to different situations. This description of their experiences and practice may offer insights into how Tibetans can successfully adapt their traditional culture to the modern world. This research may also assist Amdo Tibetans in rethinking their priorities for social change and their cultural heritage.

I am not trying to reconstruct Tibetan culture for the benefit of outsiders but rather to examine this culture, as it exists today, from a holistic perspective. This research will do much to dismiss some incorrect assumptions that are commonly made about Tibet and its culture. It represents an insider's view and western academic view on Tibetan culture and social issues.

This is a qualitative research project, which attempts to produce a thick description with firsthand data from field observations and interviews. Rossman and Rallis (2003) pointed out:

Most of us have been socialized to accept a quantitative view of science that posits a physical and social reality independent of those who experience it –a reality that can be tested and defined objectively (that is, free from any distortions brought by observer bias). (p. 8)

The qualitative approach is a way to gain insights through discovering meanings by improving our comprehension of the whole. Qualitative research explores the richness, depth, and complexity of phenomena. “[Q]ualitative research represents a very different epistemology – a way of knowing the world – that does not test hypotheses or believe researchers can control all aspects of the worlds they are exploring” (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p. 8). Qualitative research is a learning process rather than a discovery of truth. It produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. Qualitative methods often imply interpretive procedures, relativistic

assumptions, and verbally rather than numerically based representations of data. Rossman and Rallis (2003) also mention two unique features of qualitative research: (a) the researcher is the means through which the study is conducted, and (b) the purpose is to learn about some facet of the social world” (p. 5).

In this research, I used, a qualitative approach to produce a rich and thick description for the purpose of deeply understanding the social and cultural phenomena of Amdo. A major strength of the qualitative approach is the depth to which explorations are conducted and descriptions written, resulting in providing enough details so that the reader can grasp the idiosyncrasies of the situation. Qualitative studies are tools used in understanding and describing the world of human experience. Since we maintain our humanity throughout the research process, it is largely impossible to escape the subjective experience, even for the most seasoned of researchers.

However, qualitative work is often dismissed as “subjective” and regarded with suspicion. I believe small qualitative studies are not generalizable in the traditional sense, yet they have redeeming qualities that set them above that requirement.

The assumption of qualitative research is that the whole needs to be examined in order to understand its parts. I propose that there are multiple realities, not single realities of phenomena, and that these realities can differ across time and place. Each type of qualitative research is guided by particular philosophical stances.

Theories

For my analysis of Tibetan material culture in Amdo, I have employed the explanatory frameworks of American cultural anthropology (Franz Boas and Clifford Geertz), which focus on the symbols and values of a culture. This research explores Tibetans’ perceptions of themselves and of the world they live in through different symbolic forms such as their food, clothing, and shelter and changes in these patterns.

Another theoretical influence in my analysis is derived from structuralism as practiced by British social anthropologists. This theory is applied as an analytic method rather than as a guideline of this research. As Barker (2008) argued, “Structuralism is best approached as a method of analysis rather than as an all-embracing philosophy” (p. 17). Barker’s theory focused on observed social behaviors and on social structure, specifically, on relationships between social roles and social institutions. I applied this approach in my chapter on kinship terms and in my chapter on marriage. I used the same approach to examine the relationships between family members. These sections also describe how the social structure (religion, economics, and politics) affects local beliefs and values.

The notion of poststructuralism affects this research because it rejects “the idea of an underlying stable structure that [finds] found meaning through fixed binary pairs (black-

white, good-bad). Rather meaning is unstable, being always deferred and in process” (Barker, 2008, p.18).

My study of Tibetan kinship terms in Amdo highlighted the significance of enduring structures, though I did not accept the notion of stability of meaning. For example, there is a contrast between pairs of kinship terms in that “A-p(h)a” (father) only has meaning in relation to “A-ma” (mother) and vice versa, but in some different contexts in Amdo, A-p(h)a is not opposite to A-ma, and it has different referents, including the elder brother among certain social actors. Kinship terms carry many meanings, including the echoes or traces of other meanings from other related words in other contexts.

These two approaches frequently converged and generally complemented one another. For example, kinship and leadership function both as symbolic systems and as social institutions. Therefore, it is safe to refer to the work of both sets of predecessors when we apply the theories of sociocultural anthropology. We should have an equal interest in what people do and in what people say. Knowledge can be seen to be local, plural, and diverse (Barker, 2008, p. 21).

The most significant influence of poststructuralism is antiessentialism, and this notion assumes that there are no truths, subjects, or identities outside of language. Furthermore, Tibetan is a language that does not have stable referents and is therefore unable to represent fixed truths or identities. In this sense, Tibetan identity and its culture are not fixed universal things but descriptions in language, which, through social convention, come to be what counts as truth (i.e. the temporary stabilization of meaning).

Many contemporary sociocultural anthropologists abandoned earlier models of ethnography because those models treated local cultures as isolated entities. However, these anthropologists still believe that they should distinguish between the ways people in different locations experience and understand their lives. They combine a focus on the place with an effort to grasp larger political, economic, and cultural frameworks that impact the personal realities of the people in that location.

As a result, a growing trend in anthropological research is the use of multisited ethnography. Researchers pay greater attention to the modern world’s influence on communities that were once regarded as isolated.

This study not only examined Tibetan people who have lived in the same location for hundreds of years, or Tibetans who only live in rural areas. This study also touched on Tibetans who dwell in cities and towns. The purpose of such a comprehensive study is to get more information about how Tibetans feel about their capacities to advocate individual freedom, choices, and individuality. The spread of individualism in Tibet through Chinese influence shows that culture is embodied in macroconstructions of a global social order. Multisited researchers use traditional methodologies in various locations both spatially and temporally. Through this methodology, greater insight was obtained when we examined the impact of capitalism on local communities. I drew from

these theories selectively and used their concepts more as heuristic devices to illuminate the cultural setting and processes of cultural adaptation in Amdo.

Literature Review

I gathered aspects of material culture, including artifacts and written material that were available in and about Amdo. These include documents, newspaper and online articles, photographs of clothing, shelters (houses and tents), personal objects, diaries, DVDs, and decorations – any relevant information about Tibetan culture in Amdo. I translated all the Tibetan and Chinese resources I used into English. Any errors in the translation of these items are mine.

It was difficult to find any written resources about the secular culture of Tibet, especially works about Amdo during the pre-Communist period. Traditionally, Tibetan scholars have focused on religious practices and history, and they often ignore aspects of worldly culture. The remarkable Amdo history text in Tibetan, *The Religious History of Amdo* (*Mdo smad chos 'byung* or *Deb ther rgya mtsho*), (reprint in 1982), was written by a Tibetan lama, Brag-dgon-pa Dkon-chog-bstan-pa-rab-rgyas, and the author attempted to explain the development of monasteries and write a brief history of some of the Tibetan tribes in Amdo. He also attempted to interpret the term Amdo in a unique way, and traditional Tibetan scholars inherited his hypothesis (I return to this in Chapter I). There are few other records on regional or specific group history and monastery annals. As Tuttle (2010) pointed out:

Few pre-seventeenth century Tibetan or Chinese sources specifically deal with the history of the area [Amdo] in other than a cursory way. Most Tibetan language sources from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries focus on the religious (often sectarian) history while Chinese sources focus on administrative (political and military) concerns. (p. 24)

Tibetans themselves have been active in preserving and promoting the Tibetan culture since the end of the 1980s. More recently, educated Tibetans have attempted to conduct surveys on Tibet's history and religion and on the local customs and folklore in Amdo and other Tibetan areas within China. A few of these scholars have published articles about marriage customs, kinship structure, and other cultural issues in Amdo.

Dpa'-ris Sangs-rgyas (2005) wrote an article titled "The Origin of Marriage and Kinship Terminology", (*Gnyen sgrig srol dar tshul dang gnyen tshan 'bod srol kun 'dus*) to discuss the origin of Tibetan marriage from a Marxist point of view and to analyze Tibetan kinship terms and compare those terms to Chinese kinship terms. So-ba Sprang-thar-rgya-mtsho (2009) published his book on the marriage custom of the Grotshang Tribe, *The Mirror of Tibetan Marriage Custom in Grotsang*, (*Grotsang gi gnyen sgrig goms srol kun gsal me long*). It is still difficult to find written studies in any language that paint a complete picture of the marriage customs in Amdo. The studies that are available

mainly focus on a single tribe and/or village in Amdo rather than on the whole Amdo region. Some books and articles about marriage in Amdo are produced in English by young Tibetans and are coauthored with their western gurus. These materials mainly focus on the wedding ceremonies and marriage customs of a single village. Other Tibetan writers produced books and articles about Tibetan marriage from different aspects in Tibetan or Chinese language. Those materials focus on a brief introduction of the marriage traditions of a single village.

Local writers and producers are not professionals in the field of cultural studies, art, or anthropology. Their works are simple, descriptive, and rife with Chinese political rhetoric. Because those works illustrate the characteristics of local tribes or villages, their representations are useful materials for analyzing local culture and history.

Tibetans have yet to undertake scientific research specifically on either their material culture, such as shelter, food, and clothing, or on their ideology, though a few of the articles I found touched on these topics briefly. In particular, there are a numbers of online articles that present these topics in layman's language.

The only available text on Amdo culture in Tibetan is a handbook-style work, *A Brief Introduction of Amdo Tibetan Culture (Amdo'i goms srol nyung bsdus)*, by Tshenbrtan-rgyal (2010). This author broadly described traditions and customs in different villages and tribes in Amdo. The data is rich and is a good resource for information about marriage customs, foods, clothing, shelter, and other Tibetan cultural elements in Amdo. However, the author's lack of deep analysis and concrete conclusions means that we must accept that this is a nonacademic work.

There are many self-published books and articles written in various styles, and their content is largely predicted by the writers' opinions. The Tibetan New Thinkers' works (about 15 books and several articles) are the main resources for sections on the New Thinkers. There are a few articles written about Tibetan New Thinkers that aim to attack them rather than conduct an academic survey of their work.

Traditionally, Chinese Tibetologists have focused on the fields of history, religion, and language and have been inclined to focus on the past rather than on the present. Han Chinese scholars conducted surveys on Tibetan secular culture in Amdo much earlier than Tibetans themselves did. In the 1930s, many Han Chinese scholars had an opportunity to conduct fieldwork in Tibetan areas in the northwest and southwest of China. Their research mostly focused on Tibetan areas in Kansu'u (Chinese: 甘肃; pinyin: Gansu), Mtshosngon (Chinese: 青海; pinyin: Qinghai) and Sikhron (Chinese: 四川; pinyin: Sichuan) Provinces, and they rarely ventured into the TAR. Han Chinese researchers conducted field research that focused on Tibetan social structures and Tibetan Buddhism. The researchers were interested in Tibetans of Amdo and Khams, especially, Tibetans in Bsangchu or Blabrang (Labrang) (Chinese: 夏河; pinyin: Xiahe) and Western Khams (Chinese: 西康; pinyin: Xikang. Xikang is an old term for part of Khams in use in the first half of the 20th century.) because these places could have major political and

military role during this period. The main writings by Han Chinese on the subject of Amdo in this period are: Cai Yuanben's (蔡元本) *Investigation on Mongolian and Tibetan Tribes and Monks of Monasteries in Qinghai*, 1932, (《青海蒙藏旗族暨各寺院喇嘛调查》 Qinghai Mengzangqizu ji ge Siyuan Lama Diaocha) and Ma Hetian's (马鹤天) *Note of Investigating Northwestern: A Glance at Blabrang*, 1934, (《西北考察记: 拉卜楞一览》 Xibei Kaohaji: Labuleng Yilan). Li Anzhai's (李安宅) *Report of Blabrang Monastery or Field Study of Tibetan Religious History*, 1989, (《拉卜楞寺调查报告》, 或《藏族宗教史之实地研究》 Labulengsi Diaocha Baogao, huozangzu Zongjiaoshi Zhi Shidi Yanjiu). A brief description of the basic Tibetan marital customs in Qinghai is Mu Jianye's (穆建业) "Tibetan Marriage in Qinghai," 1932, (《青海藏族的婚姻》 Qinghai Zangzu de Hunyin).

It was an important first step for contemporary Chinese scholars to conduct fieldwork and write articles about Tibetan people and their society. Most research conducted comprised data collected for political and military purposes and cannot be considered to be ethnological.

A few researchers, like U.S.-educated Li Anzhai, were devoted to the research of the history and religion of the borderland of Tibet for a long time. Li Anzhai observed the local Tibetan diet and clothing through his fieldwork. He observed that ordinary Tibetans were surprised to see Han Chinese eating vegetables because they thought that yaks eat grass, but men do not. Tibetans added noodles, bread, and rice to their diet because of the Han Chinese influence (Li Anzhai, 1989, p. 266). Another Han Chinese female researcher Yu Xiangwen (俞湘文) (1947) also conducted research in the Tibetan areas of northwestern China. The result of her fieldwork was titled *Social Investigation of Nomadic Tibetans in the Northwest* (《西北游牧藏区之社会调查》 Xibei Youmu Zangqu zhi Shehui Diaocha). In this book she argued that Tibetans in this region are not a tribal society but instead a family-oriented society. She also asserted that, in general, the existing marital structure was one husband with one wife and was predominantly patrilineal, although there were some instances of matrilineal family structures.

After the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, and in the 1950s and 1960s, the Chinese central government recruited many researchers and sent them to different minority regions in order to collect so-called fact-finding data from the local communities. The goal of these surveys was to distinguish and categorize the ethnic minorities. The researchers collected limited firsthand data on language, culture, customs, economics, and politics. The result of their investigation also affected the government's policies when it designed its administrative units in the areas with large populations of ethnic minorities. Some of the reports related to the Amdo region were re-edited and published in the 1980s. Some of these works include: *Survey on the History of Tibetans and Mongolians in Qinghai Province* (1985) (《青海省藏族蒙古族历史调查》 Qinghaisheng Zangzu Mengguzu Lishi Diaocha), *Survey on History of Tibetans in Gansu Province* (1980) (《甘肃省藏族历史调查》) Gansusheng Zangzu Lishi Diaocha), and

Selections of Historic Data of Rngaba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (1980) (《阿坝藏族自治州文史资料选辑》Aba Zangzu Zizhizhou Wenshi Ziliao Xuanju). These reports became the prototype for Chinese books on the history and literature about Amdo. Research on Tibet done by Chinese scholars during this period was clearly done to serve a political agenda on the part of the Chinese government. The research definitely reflects that, but we cannot deny that these data are valuable resources for academic research because these reports record important social and cultural phenomena. My research also benefits from these reports because they provide content descriptions of local living conditions (food, clothing, shelter) and customs (marriage).

In the 1980s, different levels of administration, in Amdo, and in other regions, have established offices of the county gazetteer (Chinese: 县志; pinyin: Xianzhi) or prefecture gazetteer (Chinese: 州志; pinyin: Zhouzhi) for the purpose of writing local news reports. The books introduced the brief history, economy, culture, customs, social structure, and geography of a county or prefecture. These books and other publication materials are related to the government yearbook. All of these publications are collaborative works, and their goal is to compare past history to current events in order to demonstrate the significant economic and political achievement of the county or prefecture under the Chinese Communist Party's leadership. Similarly, some individual Chinese researchers wrote books about Rngaba (Chinese: 阿坝; pinyin: Aba) and show the progress made by this region. For instance, Huang Daihua 黄代华 and Li Keju 李克驹 (1991) wrote *A Study on Development of rnga-ba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture* (《阿坝藏族羌族自治州发展研究》Aba Zangzu Qiangzu Zizhizhou Fazhan Yanjiu). Although these publications are politically oriented and presented the Han Chinese perspective on Tibetan culture and people, they provided clues on how Tibetan culture has changed and what aspects of traditional culture still survive.

There were many changes in the Chinese researchers' direction during the late 1980s when Chinese scholars learned different research methodologies and theoretical models. It is undeniable that there has been significant growth in the area of Tibetan studies in China since the last century. However, there is still a lack of high quality anthropological research on Tibet by Chinese scholars. There are still only a few Chinese researchers, and they face many challenges, including lack of Tibetan language skills, lack of academic knowledge of and interest in Tibet, information scarcity, political issues, and research funding problems.

Since the mid 1990s, anthropology has become an important field of study in China, and scholars have begun to study current Tibetan society, economy, culture, and other subjects from a variety of different perspectives. These studies discuss and analyze specific topics of social and cultural change in Tibetan areas within China. Han Chinese scholars have focused on the TAR, and a few of them have also conducted research in other Tibetan areas. A book, edited by Su Faxiang (苏发祥) (2009), *Nomadic Regions of Amdo: A Study on Social and Cultural Change* (《安多藏族牧区：社会文化变迁研

究》Anduo Zangzu Muqu: Shehui Wenhua Bianqian Yanjiu) contains many student articles on various topics about Amdo including marital customs and local lifestyles. From this book and other writings, we can see that the character and tendency of Tibetan studies in China is to focus attention on field studies of very small localities. Some of the articles show evidence that the researchers used a combination of theoretical models and field data. Some authors claim that they are more concerned about anthropology in order to serve national solidarity and Tibetan social development. Some authors also appear to be committed to solving real problems that exist in the TAR and in other Tibetan areas. Their research is certainly affected by a political agenda and is highly patriotic in tone.

There are political and personal reasons for Han Chinese scholars to conduct research in Tibetan areas within China. Yang Qingfan's (杨清凡) (2003) book, *History of Tibetan Apparel*, (《藏族服饰史》Zangzu Fushishi) discusses the history of Tibetan traditional clothing. The author observed that the style of Tibetan clothing was often influenced by outsiders or visitors from other cultures, including the Sogdiana of ancient Persia and the ancient Chinese. According to Yang Qingfan (2003), there were three primary materials: animal skin, wool textile, and textile of silk and flax, for making apparel during the Tibetan Empire period (7th to 9th century) (p. 61). There does not appear to be literature about ancient clothing specific to Amdo. My own research is an attempt to fill this gap.

Christian missionaries were often the first westerners to reach Tibet, including some areas of Amdo, in the early 20th century. These missionaries set up missions in Amdo and traveled frequently in the region. They also observed the local society and culture and made reports about their experiences. These reports sometimes presented a clear picture of some aspects of Tibetan culture and its people. Oral memories and writings of missionaries, such as the Griebnow family (they stayed in Blabrang from 1922 to 1949 as missionaries of the Christian and Missionary Alliance or CMA) and Robert Ekvall (1898-1983), a China-born American missionary, presented a partial picture of Amdo culture and its people in the 20th century. Their works touched on a variety of topics, and they contained information on the local diet, clothing, shelter, and social structures (in Blabrang). I did not have a chance to review their writings and oral memories. But Paul Nietupski Kocot (1999), in his book, *Labrang: A Tibetan Buddhist Monastery*, presented a portrait of Tibetan culture and people in Blabrang (or Labrang) by representing Griebnows' works. As outsiders, western missionaries and Chinese scholars, misinterpreted some elements of Tibetan culture and its people, but these minor errors did not affect the general quality of their work.

In addition to missionaries, many American scholars have written materials about Tibet. K. Paul Benedict (1942) published an article, "Tibetan and Chinese Kinship Terms" in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. In this article, Benedict tried to explain why Tibetans practice matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. Benedict strongly believed that this marriage tradition affected the ways Tibetans use kinship terms and caused Tibetans

to change from using one set of kinship terms to another. Benedict concluded that the Tibetans and Chinese are culturally and socially related after he analyzed the kinship terms of both groups.

The French anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss (1969 [1949]), also discussed Tibetan kinship terms and marriage in his famous work, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, which was published in French. Levi-Strauss expressed doubt about Benedict's explanation of shifting Tibetan kinship terms for mother's brother and father's brother. Levi-Strauss (1969 [1949]) argued, "This explanation is possible. It is not entirely satisfactory, but we would have to be better informed on Tibetan rules of marriage than we are if we were to start debating the point" (p. 371).

Nonwestern scholars, both earlier in the 20th century and in the present day, specifically did research on food, clothing, and shelter in Amdo.

Many scholars, including Levine, Goldstein, and Aziz, are interested in Tibetan polyandry, but this marriage structure is actually found in Amdo, too. Researchers believe that polyandry is practiced in order to keep the wealth within a family. One western scholar, Mathias Hermanns (1959), published *Die Familie Der A Mdo-Tibeter*, in German, and in this book he examined the marriage customs of Amdo. He observed that Tibetans practiced ethnic endogamy because they did not support intermarriage with the neighboring Han Chinese. He also mentioned that he was unable to find any instances of polyandry in Amdo.

Western missionaries and scholars did not have the opportunity to visit and conduct research in Tibetan areas within China until the end of the 20th century. Western scholars have never given up studying Tibet's culture and its people and some of them have started to conduct research in the TAR and in other Tibetan areas within China. For example, Toni Huber (2002) edited *Tibetan Culture in Transition: Society and Culture in the Post-Mao Era* and showed that many western researchers have investigated social and cultural phenomena in Amdo. Without a doubt, those works presented different facets of Amdo Tibetans' culture and provided interesting research material. For this research, Gruschke's *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet's Outer Provinces: Amdo Volume 1. The Qinghai part of Amdo* (2001) is the only new book that directly discusses Amdo, its history, and the meaning of the term Amdo.

Overall, past or present, Tibetan, Chinese, and Western authors who focus on Tibetan culture and society, especially of Amdo Tibetans, broadened my knowledge and brought insights into my research.

Methods

Site and Population Selection

This research is site-specific. At the same time, it covered a large geographic area because of my decision to focus on the Amdo region. Coexisting multicultural ethnic groups and Tibetan culture have dominated the Amdo region since the 9th century. This research only targets Tibetans and their culture. Today, the region historically known as Amdo has been divided into three Chinese provincial level administrations: Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan provinces. Amdo Tibetans occupy five autonomous prefectures and a few counties in Qinghai, one prefecture and one county of Gansu, and one prefecture of Sichuan today. It is impossible to conduct observations of all the Tibetan villages in Amdo, but I managed to visit many villages in different prefectures, and I interviewed people from different locations.

Tibetans in Amdo can be categorized into four groups: farmers who live in the low valley where they can grow grains; herders, or nomads, who herd their livestock in the high grass plain; workers (including officials and students) who dwell in towns or cities; and monks or nuns who focus on religious practice in monasteries or convents. The material culture and the social customs of the first two groups are studied in this research. The new ideology of the last two groups, especially officials and students, is discussed and analyzed in detail in Part III.

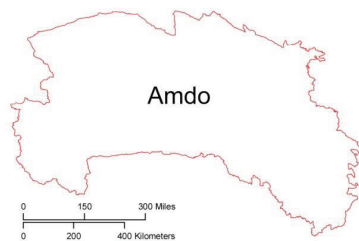


Figure 2: Amdo

Data Gathering Procedures

My research data gathering procedure includes a literature review, individual interviews, and participant observation. I conducted intensive fieldwork in Amdo from 2007 to 2012.

Interviews

I conducted formal interviews with 50 Tibetans: 7 professors (3 females, 4 males), 5 students (1 females, 4 males), 7 nomads (3 females, 4 males), 6 farmers (2 females, 4 males), 2 monks, 1 lama, 16 researchers (1 female, 15 males), and 6 New Thinkers (6 males).

The opinions of the interviewees provided insights into individual thoughts on Tibetan traditional and modern culture, how Tibetan culture serves its people, and the means by which Tibetan culture developed. Throughout the interviews, I gained firsthand information regarding the trends of Tibetan cultural change in Amdo. They often provided valuable information because of their positions in the social, political, financial, or administrative communities. I found it is best to interview these subjects by treating them to a meal in a local restaurant where we could discuss matters quietly and privately.

I interviewed most of the nomads and farmers in their homes because it was not easy for them to travel to meet me in more populated areas. I usually presented a gift to the family when I interviewed the subject.

I also informally interviewed 23 male and 12 female Tibetans including scholars, monks, farmer, herders, officials, and workers. These informal interviews were in person or via new technology devices such as cell phone, Skype and QQ (a proprietary voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP) service and software application found in China). Most of them were between 10 to 50 minutes in length; some of them were recorded on digital record and others were not (I took notes during all the interviews.). The majority of the interviews were conducted in the Amdo dialect, which is one of three major Tibetan dialects. The remaining interviews were conducted in Chinese (two interviews) or English (one interview).

In addition, I facilitated a focus group, which included Tibetan scholars who represented both traditional and modern schools of thought. This format supplemented the information I obtained from the one on one interviews and provided an opportunity for several experts to discuss the subject matter together.

Although the Tibetan language (Amdo dialect) became the main interview language, I faced several challenges during the fieldwork. For example, there is no consistent understanding of English term “culture” in the Tibetan language, and Tibetans interpret this term in different ways. For example, farmers and herders assumed that culture is something that related to education and argued that they do not have culture. This view is certainly influenced by Chinese idea that implies that “no culture” means that one has no modern education or one has no knowledge of Chinese. Many Tibetans in China use

Tibetan term *rig gnas* for culture and this term is directly translated as the Chinese term *wenhua* 文化.

Only a few Tibetan scholars had a clear understanding of what is meant by the word “culture,” and they assumed that culture is the entirety of human creations, which is an ideology borrowed from Chinese elites. Traditionally Tibetans use *rig gnas* as field of knowledge or study and then Tibetan term *rig gnas bcu* means Tibetan traditional Ten Sciences². While Tibetans in China use *rig gnas* to refer to culture, Tibetan in exile use Tibetan term *shes rig* for corresponding with the English term culture.

The Merriam–Webster dictionary defines culture as: the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. My own definition of culture is that it is the way of life. Sometimes it is hard to communicate this to the local people. I often had trouble communicating with my subjects because there was some confusion when I used academic jargon. This was also the case when I interviewed scholars, because our understanding of the terms may have been different.

I spent a lot of time and energy with my interview subjects. I think my lengthy explanations helped me get meaningful responses to my questions. It is hard to imagine what challenges scholars must face in getting responses to their questions when they have to hire interpreters to assist in the research.

I grew up in Amdo, and my family currently lives in the area, so there were no restrictions on my travel to the region. I met most of my interview subjects through personal connections or recommendations from my friends. As a native Tibetan speaker (Amdo dialect) I was easily able to talk with my research participants in the field. I also understand the sensitivity of Chinese authorities toward ethnic issues, and I did not have any trouble speaking with my respondents.

The research interviews were between 30 minutes and 4 hours in length, and were tape recorded. Within a week of conducting the interviews, I listened to the recordings and took notes in English. I later transcribed some significant portions of the interviews and subsequently abstracted aspects of the interviews that I deemed to be important and applicable to my study questions. While I listened to and transcribed the interviews, I identified common themes. I then categorized the interviews according to how the respondents focused on the common themes.

The statements of my interview subjects were crosschecked with information from my field observations and literature review.

² Ten Sciences: Arts, grammar, medicine, logic, Buddhism, astrology, poetics, prosody, synonymics, and drama.

Observations

Participant observation was also an important aspect of my data gathering methods. I could easily take notes every day on what I saw, heard, and experienced in Amdo.

My own life experience of post-Mao era in Amdo was a great asset for my research. I spent most of my childhood life on the grassland and was very familiar with the nomadic life. As a teenager I went to a Tibetan high school in the Rongbo (Chinese: 隆务, pinyin: Longwu) Town, which was surrounded by secondary villages, and I had the chance to observe the lives of farmers in Amdo. After I gained a bachelor's degree in History Education from Qinghai Normal University in Xining, I returned to the same town and taught history and computer science at my former high school. This time I made more friends and had a chance to learn more about the culture of villagers in this region. Later I worked as an interpreter and project advisor for several NGOs in Amdo, which required me to travel to different parts of Amdo to observe local situations.

During my fieldwork for this research, I observed the daily life of 10 villages from each group and participated in several local events such as a wedding ceremony, lunar New Year celebrations, and family gatherings.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Analysis begins when the data is first collected and is used to guide decisions related to further data collection. Rossman and Rallis (2003) note that "Many methodological writers present two options for formal analysis: ongoing analysis and analysis at the end of data gathering" (p. 272). For this research, the ongoing analysis was applied, and the analysis of the data took place as the study unfolded. This option also made the final analysis easier. The analysis began when I was developing the research questions. I found it wise to reflect on the data, ask analytical questions, and write descriptive memos throughout the study.

According to Rossman and Rallis' (2003) research, qualitative methodologists acknowledge two sets of overall analytic strategies, one emphasizing the development of analytic categories, and the other focusing more on description (p. 273). The present research applied a combination of categorical and holistic analysis for surveying Tibetan culture in Amdo. For example, interviews, fieldwork notes, and documents were analyzed through the following categories of cultural phenomena—kinship system, marriage custom, diaries, clothing, shelter, and ideology. I wrote each chapter in order to explore these themes of Tibetan culture in Amdo. This strategy discovered similarities and differences among the data, and this allowed me to code and sort the different data into appropriate categories. This research is focused on description and a holistic, contextualized analysis. The result of this research is a narrative portrait of Tibetan culture in Amdo that describes connections among the data in the actual context.

This inquiry is guided by the conceptual framework and its embedded theories. The process of this study is an interweaving of inductive and deductive thinking. As Rossman and Rallis (2003) mention, “Whatever, strategies you use, the foundation of analysis is thick description. Thick description details physical surroundings, time and place, actions, events, words, and people on the scene. It can suggest or hint at intentions and meaning” (p. 275).

It is true that data analysis develops order, structure, and meaning to the collected data. Without a doubt, data analysis is time-consuming, creative, fascinating, and frustrating. There are various ways to analyze data and create meanings from data. This research accepts the seven phases of typical analytic procedures developed by Rossman and Rallis (2003).

- Organizing the data
- Familiarizing yourself with the data
- Generating categories and themes
- Coding the data
- Interpreting
- Searching for alternative understandings
- Writing the report. (p. 279)

In the first stage of the analysis, the raw data of this research was clustered into different factors according to the research questions. The research theories also played a major role in discovering themes and meanings embedded in the data “to reduce the massive amounts of data collected” (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p. 279). During organization and familiarization, I listen to recorded interviews, and read, reread, and read again my transcribed interviews, field notes, and literature review notes to immerse myself in the data in order to become deeply involved in the words, impressions, and flow of events. I have gradually become familiar with the research data, and my understanding of data in-depth developed insights about the salient themes and meaning embedded in the data.

This study began with some preliminary categories – material culture, marriage customs, and ideology among Amdobas in order to focus data gathering because of the nature of categories. Category is a word or phrase relating some segment of research data that is explicit. These categories are explained in the interview questions and guidelines for observation. Categories provide direction for data gathering (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p. 282).

Theme is a phrase or sentence describing a more subtle and tacit process. Themes often emerge during intensive analysis as the researcher locates and describes more subtle processes. For example, my study of material culture in Amdo generated categories such as food, clothing, and shelter. These categories were clearly recognized at the beginning of the study as important cultural aspects to explore in Amdo. I sorted excerpts from

interviews and observations into those categories. However, a further analysis revealed the theme of cultural interactions and adaptations. After I discovered salient themes, I coded and recoded the data and finally developed the interpretations that produced a thick description for my completed dissertation.

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003):

[C]oding is the formal representation of categorizing and thematic analysis; it does not precede or invalidate the necessary of deeper analysis. [...] Coding entails thinking through what you take as evidence of a category or theme. (pp. 284-285)

There are different mechanics for coding, and many researchers love to use software alternatives. I used hard copy, and I coded the data by hand by bracketing chunks and drawing a symbol representing a category in the margin. I also used a scheme that is simple and clear to myself and others. I then made lists on specially created cards and noted particular categories on them. The lists included evidence of participation as found in the interviews, field notes, and documents, along with the date and page numbers on which I found the references.

In a sense, the process of interpreting the data helps the reader understand the researcher's own story. The goal of the process is to tell a richly detailed story rather than determine a single causal explanation or to predict.

The most obvious readers for this monograph include: professors, classmates, and western scholars. This research tries to represent some aspects of Tibetan culture in Amdo through the perspective of a native Tibetan using mixed ways of telling the story. I cannot deny that my Tibetan way of thinking affects the tone of this research. The researcher must make the process of the study accessible and write descriptively so tacit knowledge may best be communicated through the use of rich, thick descriptions.

Notes on Non-English terms

This research applied the Wylie transliteration scheme to transliterate Tibetan names, locations and technical terms in order to reduce confusion on the endless phonetic variations of Tibetan dialects. Wylie transliteration has subsequently become a standard transliteration scheme in Tibetan studies, especially in the United States. It is not intended to help in the correct pronunciation of a Tibetan word. Wylie specified that if a word was to be capitalized, the first letter should be capital, in conformity with Western capitalization practices, though Tibetan dictionaries are organized by root letter, and prefixes are often silent, and knowing the root letter gives one a better idea of the pronunciation.

Thus, a particular Tibetan male name Dorje is capitalized *Rdo-rje* rather than *rDo-rje*. Moreover, this research transcribed Tibetan names with hyphens because Tibetans do not use surname or family names, but they often use titles or names of birth places before

their names (giving names and religious names). For example, a lengthy Tibetan name used in this text is Brag-dgon-pa Dkon-mchog-bstan-pa-rab-rgyas. Brag-dgon-pa is his title (the name of his monastery and he is the Tulku of it) and the rest is his religious name. Tibetan locations all joined together using Wylie transliteration and technical terms transcript in lower case and in italics word by word without hyphens. For instance, a Tibetan location is Rrachu (Chinese: 玛曲; pinyin: Maqu) and a Tibetan technical term is *rgyu 'ded* (or collecting the bride-wealth). Westerners who are not familiar with Tibetan language Romanization may find it difficult to pronounce those Tibetan terms in the Wylie transliteration, and the only solution for this problem is to learn the Tibetan language or at least to learn the 30 consonants and four vowels of the Tibetan writing system.

Chinese names, locations and technical terms are written in both Chinese and Pinyin (Chinese: 拼音, pinyin: Pinyin) and simplified characters (Chinese: 汉字; pinyin: Hanzi). Pinyin is the official system used for transcribing Chinese characters into the Roman alphabet in China and in Hong Kong. It is also often used to teach Mandarin Chinese and spell Chinese names in foreign publications. Some Tibetan names and locations are also written in both Chinese and Pinyin because their works in Chinese and many Tibetan locations have Chinese names or only found Chinese names. A list of non-English terms is provided in Appendix I.

Arrangement of Chapters

This dissertation has three parts and eight chapters. The first part has two chapters. Chapter One interprets the Tibetan term “Amdo” and introduces new Chinese administrative districts of present-day Amdo. Chapter Two mainly focuses on material culture (food, clothing, and shelter) in Amdo and its new trends. Chapters Three and Four comprise Part II of the dissertation, and the purpose of these chapters is to discuss kinship and alliances among Amdobas. Part III has four chapters. All four chapters present the conflict between traditional and modern values. The Tibetan New Thinkers have tried introducing modern values to Tibetans, but many Tibetans have rejected their efforts. Overall, this dissertation explores social and cultural phenomenon in Amdo through a native perspective and a qualitative approach.

PART I: AMDO AND MATERIAL CULTURE IN AMDO

CHAPTER 1

THE TIBETAN TERM AMDO: SIMPLE YET COMPLICATED

Tibetans and non-Tibetans alike frequently use the Tibetan term *Amdo* in academia and in general communication. Tibetans in Amdo declare that they are *Amdoba* (phonetic: Am do wa), if they are born in Amdo or if their mother tongue is the Amdo dialect, which is one of the three main Tibetan dialects (*Dbus gtsang skad*, *Am skad* or *Amdo skad* and *Khams skad*). Amdobas live in the Tibetan areas of Qinghai 青海 Province (except the Yulshul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture), the Kanlho (Chinese: 甘南; pinyin: Ganan) Prefecture and Dpa'ris (Chinese: 天祝; pinyin: Tianzhu) County in Gansu 甘肃 Province, and in part of the Rngaba (Chinese: 阿坝; pinyin: Aba) Prefecture in Sichuan 四川 Province, which is populated by 480,700 Tibetans 1997³.



Figure 3: Tibetan Cultural Area

³Guo D. (1997). Tibet's population and Tibetan population. Retrieved in May 2009 from: <http://www.popline.org/docs/1245/131465.html> (This web site is no longer available.)

Many people assume that Amdo is only a geographic term because it is the name of a historic region in Tibet. Some assume Amdo is a cultural region rather than a political area (Gruschke, 2001). Amdobas argue that present-day Amdo is divided into many Chinese administrative districts, and it is difficult to clearly identify the precise location of Amdo. Amdobas prefer to define Amdo as a particular Tibetan culture and language zone where Tibetans speak *Amdo skad* (or *Am skad*) rather than either of the other two major Tibetan languages, *Dbusgtsang skad* or *Khams skad*. However there is no standard version of *Amdo skad*, and villagers in Amdo speak in various dialects. *Am skad* has two major dialect differentiations: *Rong skad* (agricultural area dialect) and *'brog skad* (nomadic dialect). Farmers and herders in Amdo can usually understand each other, but they may have difficulty communicating with other Amdobas because of the differences in dialects. In some areas of Amdo, people speak distinct dialects, and other Amdobas cannot communicate with those villagers and herders.

To some extent, Amdobas themselves are not sure what Amdo refers to, and this is partly because there is no conclusive definition of the term Amdo. I am an Amdoba, and I have frequently heard and used the Tibetan term Amdo without understanding its real meaning or origin. Even the pronunciation of the term Amdo varies because some people may read it as A-mdo or others read it as Am-do. We need to pay serious and particular attention to the meaning and pronunciation of the term Amdo when we examine it because this term causes difficulty for both Tibetans and non-Tibetans.

Some people argue that Amdo is defined as the birthplace of Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug- rang-grol (1781-1851), the 14th Dalai Lama, Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho (1935-), and the 10th Pan-chen Lama, Blo-bzang-'phrin-las-lhun-grub-chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan (1938-1989). Some people believe that Amdo is the equivalent of what is now called Qinghai Province. Many people think of Amdo as one of the three historical Tibetan provinces: Dbus gtsang (U-Tsang), Khams (Kham) and Amdo. Many young Tibetans see Amdo as a place where contemporary Tibetan literature has recently reemerged and is flourishing. It is true that many modern Tibetan writers and scholars are from Amdo and that they have promoted *Am skad* in both literature and in academia since China's post-Mao era began in 1979. However, Amdo is an ambiguous term even for Tibetologists (scholars who focus on Tibetan culture and issues), and my research has shown that Tibetologists ignore the origin and meaning of this term. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the meaning and origin of the term Amdo before we can understand what Amdo is and where present-day Amdo lies. I am also obliged to clarify the meaning or origin of the term Amdo because my research focuses specifically on contemporary Tibetan cultural and social change in Amdo.

During my review of literature on Amdo, I found that a serious problem for researchers is the ambiguity in the toponym Amdo. A toponym is the name by which a geographical place is known. As Gruschke (2001) pointed out, "The meaning of a

province named Amdo has not yet been found in earlier Tibetan resources” (p.11). The literature dealing with the term Amdo is sparse, and my interviews with other Tibetans (Amdobas) failed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the term Amdo. There is no evidence to confirm when Tibetans began to use this term.

1.0 The Origin of the Term Amdo

Some scholars believe that the term Amdo entered common usage in the 17th century, with its source dating back to the term *Mdo smad* or *Mdo khams* (or Do-kham), which possibly emerged in the 7th century, or as late as the 13th century. Dbang-rgyal and Bsod-nyams-skyid (1992:196) assumed that the Tibetan term *Mdo smad* occurred in AD 653, according to a Dunhuang (Chiense:敦煌; pinyin: Dunhuang) document. It seems that the Tibetan term *Mdo smad* existed prior to *Mdo khams*, and it may have covered the regions that were later called Amdo.

Tibetans traditionally divided Tibet into three parts: upper or inside (*Gtsang*), middle (*Dbus*) and lower area (*Mdo*). That does not mean Tibetans use scientific knowledge to divide the land of Tibet according to its real location above sea level. For example, historical Tibetan texts and present oral tradition often say “upper India,” “middle Tibet” and “lower China” when Tibetans describe their neighbors and their own land. This shows the notion of Tibet centralism and Lhasa centralism when Tibetans discuss their own land and their neighbors rather than indicating the actual height above sea level. Amdobas still call Lhasa as “Upper Sun City of Lhasa” though many Amdobas live in areas higher than Lhasa. In the same way, Tibetans in *Dbus gtsang* call the areas beyond *Dbus gtsang* as *mdo smad*, which means lower land. For Tibetans, present-day *Mdo Khams* is referred to the region beyond the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR).

Shar Skal-ldan-rgya-mtsho (1607–1677), a Tibetan clergyman from Amdo, used the term Amdo in one of his religious songs (reprint: 1994), though he neither explained the meaning of this term nor identified where or what Amdo is. This example shows that Tibetans used the Tibetan term Amdo in the 17th century, if not before. However, Tibetan and non-Tibetan scholars alike tend to investigate and interpret the Tibetan term Amdo in different ways. We should display their ideas and examine their conclusions before we trace the meaning of *Mdo smad* and/or *mdo*, which is the core of the Tibetan term Amdo.

Gruschke (2001) tries to discover the origin of the term Amdo and he wrote:

So, why should the northeast of Tibet as a geographical or cultural entity be called Amdo? According to Hermanns, there is a steep rock on the northern slope of Payankara [Bayanhari] Mountains, somewhere near the headwaters of the Ma Chu [Rmachu]. It is said that a natural formation resembling the Tibetan letter A is found on that rock. Near there, the river leaves the mountains, flowing into a wider valley, and as such a river outlet in Tibetan is called *mdo* [so] the name of Amdo may be explained as ‘[Rmachu] river outlet near the A-shaped rock formation. (p.12)

Tibetan scholars also have a parallel explanation of Amdo, although Tibetans talk about two different place names. The Tibetan scholar and lama, Brag-dgon-pa Dkon-mchog-bstan-pa-rab-rgyas (written in 1865, reprinted in 1982), who was born in 1801 in Amdo and wrote a book titled *The Religious History of Amdo* (*Mdo smad chos 'byung or Deb ther rgya mtsho*), argued that the term Amdo is the merging of two Tibetan words *a-* and *mdo*, which refer to the first two words of the mountain of Achen Gangsrgyab and Mdola. Brag-dgon-pa assumes that Tibetan people took the first letter *a-* of Achen Gangsrgyab and the first word *mdo* of Mdola to make the term Amdo. Therefore, Amdo could be a vast lower region of the southern bend or bay of the lake Skyaring Lake or Soloma on Rmachu or the Yellow River basin. Brag-dgon-pa imagined that the lower part of this bend of the Yellow River basin is the area of Amdo. This idea fits well with Gruschke's reference. Brag-dgon-pa and Gruschke wrote of the same place, although they chose different meanings for it being named as it is, based on their different hypotheses of the origins of letters *A-* and *Mdo*. Many Tibetan scholars have followed Brag-dgon-pa's judgment and have accepted this traditional explanation. I noticed during my fieldwork that Tibetan scholars also support this assumption, although they did not provide any specific reason for their judgment. The majority of my respondents agreed with this position. Some of my interviewees interpreted Achen Gangsrgyab (a place the Chinese call Keke Xili in the Yushu Prefecture of Qinghai Province) and Mdola as the Silk Road or Hexi zoulang 河西走廊 in Gansu Province. According to Wikipedia, Kekexili is:

[A]n isolated region in the northwestern part of the Tibetan plateau in China. The region covers 83,000km² at an average elevation of 4,800m, between the Tanggula and Kunlun mountain chains in the border areas of Southwest China's Tibetan Autonomous Region, Northwest China's Qinghai Province and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. It is one of the major headwater sources of the Yangtze River. (Retrieved in January 2010 from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kekexili>)

One of my interviewees provided new information about a Chinese name for Mdola. His interpretation is that the Chinese name of Mdola should be Qilianshan 祁连山.

Wikipedia also defines the Qilian 祁连 Mountain as follows:

[It] is a northern outlier of the Kunlun Mountains, forming the border between Qinghai and Gansu provinces of northern China. (Retrieved in January 2010 from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qilian_Mountains)

Some may argue that it is too naïve to totally agree with this conclusion. We still need to investigate the Chinese names carefully. Other Tibetans assume that the valley of Tsongkha Mountain is Mdola Ringmo. The Tsongkha Bdekhams or G.yarmothang were in Mdola Ringmo. Tsongkha is the place where Rje Tsong-kha-pa⁴ (1357–1419) was

⁴ Tsongkhapa was the founder of the *Dge lugs* (Geluk) school. He is also known by his ordained name Blo-bzang-grags-pa (Lobsang Drakpa) or simply as Rje rin po che (Je Rinpoche) .

born. Tsongkha also means a place where onions grow wild, or the Onion Valley. It is clear that Tsongkha and *Mdo smad* correspond to two different places, according to the Donhuang document (Dbang-rgyal and Bsod-nyams-skyid 1992:196), since it mentioned the two place names at the same time, yet the two place names represent two different regions. Thus, we are reminded that the Tibetan term Amdo covers both regions.

Dge-'dun-chos-'phel (1903–1951), an important Tibetan scholar who was born in Amdo, interpreted the meaning of Amdo in his own way in the 20th century. In his book *White Annals: History of Tibet* (reprint: 1980) Dge-'dun-chos-'phel suggested:

Both *Khams* and *Mdo* put together called Khams, and which is located in the east part of Tibet. And this area called *khams*. *Khams* means edge or borderland. [...] Then the Tibetan term Amdo is originally from a Tibetan term *Mdo*. There is naturally initial syllable *a-* (Written Tibetan xa.) in front of *Mdo* because people emphasize the sound of word *Mdo* when they read it clearly. The whole region of Amdo was called Tsongkha territory in ancient times. Nowadays places around Ziling [Chinese: 西宁; pinyin: Xining] called Tsongkha and the rest of region called Tsongkha chenpo or great Tsongkha. (pp. 8-9)

We cannot accept Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's theory because Tsongkha and *Mdosmad* appeared at the same period in a Donhuang document, which I mentioned above. It is clear that Amdo includes these two regions. However, this idea assumes that the Tibetan term Amdo is originally from the Tibetan term *Mdo*, which means at the junction of valleys and rivers. Similarly Gruschke (2001) pointed out, "the Tibetan term *mdo* also refers to lower lands, namely the lower part of a valley where it merges into the plain, it thus looks as if the eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau was originally just called *mdo*" (p.12).

Another Tibetan scholar, Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las (2002), interpreted the term Amdo in his dictionary:

Amdo is a combination name for a place of the mountains of Achengangsrgyab, which is located in east of Bayanhari crossed Sebo valley of the Yangtze River and Mdola. The lower part of this place is called Amdo. There is naturally an initial syllable *a-* occurring in front of *Mdosmad* when people clearly read the word. (p. 2192)

It seems that Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las simply summarized the explanations given by Brag-dgon-pa and Dge-'dun-chos-'phel. We cannot find any new elements from his interpretation.

Gele 格勒 (2006), a Chinese educated Tibetan, proposed that "the term Amdo is a combination of the first letter of Achen Gangsri (Chinese: 玛卿雪山; pinyin: Maqing Xueshan) and the first word of Mdolaringmo (Chinese: 积石山; pinyin: Jishishan)" (pp. 24-25), and he also assumed that *Mdo* is also called Amdo. Thus, it seems to us that he supported Brag-dgon-pa's argument about the origin of the term Amdo.

Interestingly, Gele's translation of the Chinese names for these two places is different from the translations of other Tibetan scholars. Gele asserted that Achen Gangsri is the famous Rmachén Mountain or Amnyes Rmachén, which is located in the

Mgolog (in English often written as Golok) Prefecture, in Qinghai Province. Actually many Tibetan scholars believe that Achen Gangsrgyab should be Keke Xili 可可西里 in Chinese. Gele also incorrectly assumed that Mdola Ringmo is the Chinese Jishishan. Amnyes Rmachen Mountain, also known as Jishishan in Chinese, is located in the Rmachen (Chinese: 玛卿; pinyin: Maqing) County of Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Qinghai Province. It seems that Gele mistakenly chose the same Chinese name but in different forms for two different place names in the Tibetan language: Achen Gangsri (Chinese: 玛卿雪山; pinyin: Maqing Xueshan) and Mdola Ringmo (Chinese: 积石山; pinyin: Jishishan).

Janhunen (2006), a Finnish linguist, pointed out that “A problem with the Tibetan name of Amdo is the initial syllable *a-* (Written Tibetan xa.), which seems to be etymological and has no synchronic meaning” (p. 97). Dge-‘dun-chos-‘phel (1980) proposed that Tibetans usually put the Tibetan letter *a-* in front of another word when they stress or emphasize (reading) the word. In this case, the term *Mdo* is the core of the term Amdo and Tibetan letter *a-* is just a stressed letter or sound with the term *Mdo*. We can easily find similar examples in the Amdo dialect. Amdobas often attach the Tibetan letter *a-* to a word when they intend to emphasize it. They even add the Tibetan letter *a-* in front of person’s name when they call his or her name loudly and urgently. For instance, a Tibetan woman named Sgrol-ma (pronounced drolma) would be called *a-Drolma* when another calls her from a long distance. One of my interviewees also noticed that news anchors from Amdo often attach the Tibetan letter *a-* unconsciously to a word when they emphasize it. He also gave an example that Amdoba news anchors frequently add the Tibetan letter *a-* to the term *glu ba* (sound like lu-wa) or singer so it often becomes *a- glu ba* (sound like *a-glu-wa*) (a-singer). According to the *New Tibetan Dictionary* (2006), it expresses love or respect if Tibetan letter *a-* is put in front of the names of Tibetan kinship terms. For instance, *a-pha* (father), *a-ma* (mother), *a-khu* (father’s brother), *a-ne* (father’s sister), *a-sru* (sister-in-law), etc. (p.868). Janhunen (2006) argues, “For the time being it can only be concluded that the *a-* of *Amdo* is an extra syllable of unknown origin, perhaps- or perhaps not- similar to that in kinship terms like *a-pa* ‘father’ and *a-ma* ‘mother’ ” (p.98). While some of my interviewees have accepted Dge-‘dun-chos-‘phel’s explanation of the term Amdo, other Tibetans assume this is a very simple and naïve explanation. I believe Dge-‘dun-chos-‘phel did not study modern theories of linguistics, and he could only explain the term according to his own language.

It seems that the Tibetan term *Mdo* has a significant role in the interpretation of the Tibetan term Amdo. I will investigate Mdokhams and Mdosmad next, since the term *Mdo* is derived from one of these two terms.

2.0 Mdokhams or Do-kham

Scholars have tried to understand Mdokhams or Do-kham and the popularity of these words and what they mean. Gruschke (2001) quoted Ren and Tshe-dbang's (1991) argument:

While the designations Amdo and Kham have become widely used in modern times, it is less known that until the 19th century Tibetan sources only used the composite Tibetan term Do-kham. As *Mdo khams* it may be found in Tibetan, as *Duo gansi* in Chinese sources, starting in the Mongol-Chinese Yuan dynasty (1274–1368). (p.11)

Gele (2006) also believed that scholars can only find the term *Mdo khams* or Duogansi 朵甘思 as early as the 14th century and stated, “[M]dostod [Chinese: 多堆; pinyin: duodui] is upper *mdo* and it is Amdo and mdosmad [Chinese: 多美; pinyin: duomei] is lower *mdo* and it is Khams” (p. 25). My interviewees said that some Tibetan scholars traditionally, and inexplicably, held that Mdosmad refers to Khams (or Kham). However, if one is familiar with Tibetan language and history, it is clear that in most cases Tibetans refer to Mdosmad (or Mdokhamssmad) as Amdo and Mdostod (Mdokhamsstod) as Khams. The majority of Tibetans recognize Amdo as the historical Mdosmad. Today, many Tibetan books and magazines frequently use Mdosmad in reference to Amdo. Whichever reference is used, it is important to distinguish between the two terms. Traditionally, highly regarded Tibetan scholars from Amdo attach *Mdosmad pa* (a person from Mdosmad or Amdo) before their names to distinguish themselves from other Tibetans. For instance, the great Tibetan scholar *Mdosmad pa* Dge'-dun-chos'-phel was born in the Amdo Rebgong, a Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Qinghai.

Brag-dgon-pa also mentions that Khams is located on the upper Rmachu (Yellow River) basin, and Amdo is located on the lower Rmachu basin. This is why Tibetans refer to Khams as Mdostod and identify Amdo as Mdosmad. Traditionally, Tibetans prefer not to use different names for every place or village, but to name their territories according to relative geographic locations, e.g. upper, middle, and lower. For example, Rebgong is traditionally divided into Upper and Lower Rebgong (Tibetan: Rebgong *yarnang* and *marnang*).

Tibetan historians often divide Tibet into three regions or provinces: *Stod Mnga' ris skor gsum* (or the upper three sections/tribes), *Bar Dbus gtsang* (U-tsang) *ru bzhi* (or the middle four tribes/brigades), and *Smad Mdo khams sgang drug* (or the lower six ranges).

Another similar approach to describing historic Tibetan regions is the Tibetan expression '*Bod Chol kha gsum*,' which is used to categorize Tibetans into three regional groups using their individual symbols and what they recognize as different among each other. Interestingly, the term *Chol kha*, meaning group, is not a Tibetan word, and some Tibetan scholars believe the word *Chol kha* is of Mongolian origin. Other Tibetan scholars argue that the term itself is of Tibetan origin but it has been misspelled for centuries. During my fieldwork, I discovered that some Tibetan scholars believe that the

correct spelling could be group or clique (*phyogs kha*), but others argued that it should be wing or party (*gshog ka* or *pa*). The misspelling may have occurred because Amdobas would have the same pronunciation for these two words, and scholars misspelled the word by basing the spelling on the pronunciation. The notion of *Chol kha* is similar to English term “wing” when it is used to describe politics in the present-day and war in ancient times. The '*Bod Chol kha gsum*' or three groups of Tibet are: '*Mdo stod mi'i chol kha*' or the wing of human (Some scholars say Khams had a huge population compared to other Tibetan regions when these terms were created, although we do not know exactly when they were created.), '*Dbustsang chos kyi chol kha*' or the wing of Dharma (Tibetan Buddhism developed in central Tibet), and '*Mdo smad rta'i chol kha*' or the wing of horses (Amdo had many horses. There are still many white horses in Dpa'ris. Horses became a significant symbol for Amdo). It is also important to understand that Tibetans and Chinese exchanged horses and tea in this region. These phrases would then have been coined after Buddhism was introduced to Tibet in the 6th century.

Tibetans have employed the geographical terms *mdo* and *khams* in many situations. They also frequently used *Mdo smad* and *Mdo stod* to refer to Amdo and Khams respectively. However, these historical terms indicate that Tibetans clearly recognized Amdo and Khams even though Tibetan scholars have preferred to use the terms Mdosmad and Mdostod. It appears that lay Tibetans created the terms Amdo and Khams according to their language habits and associations, whereas Tibetan intellectuals preferred to employ the terms Mdosmad and Mdostod. However, all agreed that these are different historical groups based on different geographic areas in eastern Tibet. Ren and Tshe dbang rdo rje are quoted in Gruschke (2001) and argued that:

Ren and Tse-dbang-rdo-rje alike use the term Do-kham [Mdokhams] as 'a reference to the whole Tibetan-populated area east of Kong-po and Nag-chu.' That is to say, it includes all the regions embraced by the modern toponyms Amdo, Kham and Gyarong, plus some minor adjacent regions. (p.11)

There is no Tibetan or non-Tibetan source indicating the date when Tibetans started to use Amdo and the two other relevant terms *Mdo* and *Khams*. Gele (2006) argued that the two Tibetan terms *Mdo* and *Khams* existed separately in the past and he found the merged term Duogansi (or *Mdokhams*) in a Chinese source in the 14th century. Gele also pointed out that, “mdo-khams” is a combination of two regional names, which are *Khams* and *Mdo*. Khams and Amdo were combined as mdo-khams, also mentioned in *History of Yuan Dynasty*, as ‘duogansi’(朵甘思)” (pp.24-25). In contrast, the two toponyms Amdo and Khams are the result of the separation of the term Mdokhams. That means the term Do-kham or Mdokhams could have been one word in ancient times and that these two words were recently separated (Gruschke, 2001, p.12). These two scholars have the same idea that Amdo was formed from the Tibetan term Do-Kham, though one insisted on combination and another favored separation. In fact, it is fair to say that Amdo is derived from the Tibetan term Mdosmad. As I mentioned before, Tibetans use Mdosmad instead

of Amdo to indicate the place where people speak an Amdo dialect. Gruschke did not arrive at the conclusion that the two Tibetan terms Amdo and Mdosmad have the same meaning though he observed that Tibetan sources, sometimes, divide Amdo into two parts: Mdostod and Mdosmad. However, Gruschke (2001) summarized Wylie's (1962) analysis of Lama Bla-ma Btsan-po's works as follows:

Lama Tsenpo (*bla ma btsan po*, died in 1839) in his reference work – the only comprehensive Tibetan geography – refers to what nowadays is called Amdo by the term *Mdo-smad Amdo*, i.e. the lower *mDo Amdo*. The eastern part of Changthang, called Yarmothang by the Amdowas [Amdobas], is represented as mDo-Kham Yarmothang. The latter is regarded by Lama Tsenpo as being a section of Amdo. Even 19th century Tibetan use of the terms Amdo and Kham does not bring us any further. (p. 12)

Other Tibetans assume that these terms may be found in earlier Tibetan sources. One of my interviewees, Rdo-rje-rgyal, a Tibetan scholar in Rebgong, (Interview January 2008), said, “We can only find the term Mdosmad after commencement of the second Buddhist period in Tibet, around the year AD 978.” As mentioned above, the Tibetan term Mdosmad occurred in the year AD 653 according to a Donhuang document. It seems that the Tibetan term Mdosmad existed prior to Mdokhams and may have covered the regions that were later referred to as Amdo. Therefore, we can refute the hypothesis that Amdo is derived from the separation or combination of Mdokhams. It is clear that Mdokhams means the outer region, realm, or place of the central Tibet. Tibetans also use *rgyal khams* to indicate the territory of a country. I have to make clear that the term Khams means realm, borderland, or edge. Therefore, we should not over-emphasize Mdokhams, since it may embody a different meaning to different people. These terms came into use later, although we do not know exactly when. It is fair to say the term Mdosmad gave birth to the term Amdo.

Gruschke's (2001) understanding of Mdokhams is of a vast region beyond U-Tsang. He observed:

With *yul khams* interpreted as a political territory or empire, and *rgyal khams* as a kingdom, an expression like *mdo khams* may also be taken, at least originally, as ‘the lower world, the territory of the lowlands’. In a central Tibetan perspective, those lower or eastern regions were border areas, completing U-Tsang to form a ‘Great Tibet’ (*bod chen*). (p.12)

Dge-'dun-chos-'phel (1980) may not have agreed with Gruschke on the concept of a *Great Tibet*. He suggested:

Mnga'ris [or Ngari] was the Tibet directly controlled by Tibetan ancient btsan pos or kings, and the other Tibetan areas were called Greater Tibet. Although some Tibetan scholars interpreted U-gtsang as Tibet and Mdokhams as Great Tibet, there is evidence to prove they were wrong. (p.8)

It seems Gruschke's idea of Mdokhams as East Tibet is acceptable, but as I discussed earlier, Mdosmad existed prior to Mdokhams. Mdosmad is the vast region from Achen

Gangsrgyab to Mdola according to Brag-dgon-pa. The border of Amdo and Khams is near the mountain of Achen Gangsrgyab, or this mountain itself could be the border. The problem is that present-day Tibetans and Tibetologists recognize Achen Gangsrgyab as a vast place rather than a mountain.

Many of my interviewees agreed with Brag-dgon-pa's explanation though many could not clearly indicate where Mdola is actually located. Not surprisingly, Tibetans still use the traditional means of defining Amdo. The results from my interviews showed that many Tibetans simply accept this idea when they learned of this theory from Brag-dgon-pa's work. They honestly informed me that they do not see any other explanation for the Tibetan term Amdo. Some of them also argued that other Tibetan scholars simply follow Brag-dgon-pa's hypothesis without investigation. In Amdo, it is true that Brag-dgon-pa's work is very popular, and Tibetans do not tend to question the work of revered scholars. Therefore, Brag-dgon-pa's explanation is extremely popular among Tibetan scholars, and most Tibetans have not been inclined to investigate alternative origins or meanings for the term Amdo. Thus Amdo is a broad lower area of Achen Gangsrgyab and Mdola Ringmo, although the exact boundaries of this region could vary at different times.

Gruschke (2001) concluded:

We should, therefore, look at Amdo and Kham in the sense of being cultural or geographical provinces of Tibet, as they were not individually defined by the toponym Do-kham [Mdokhams] alone, but rather as areas beyond U-Tsang [Dbusgtsang]. (p.12)

Chinese scholars (Chia Ning, 2008: 155-156) may agree with Gruschke about Amdo in the sense of a cultural and geographic province of Tibet rather than a political administrate. It is clear that there is contrary evidence to Gruschke's explanation of the origin of the term Amdo.

3.0 Present-day Amdo

Amdo is a place where many ethnic groups have coexisted for many centuries. Today Han Chinese comprise the majority in present-day Amdo (in urban and agricultural areas), while Tibetans are still the largest population in the rural areas of modern Amdo. It is clear that Amdo covered different regions in history, and it has represented different geographic and cultural areas at different times. However, there are two ways to identify present-day Amdo, according to information from my fieldwork.

The first method is to consider what kind of Tibetan dialect people speak. We should call them Amdoba if they speak *Amdo skad* or the Amdo dialect. This is a language determination method. Some of my interviewees criticized this idea because they believed that all nomads speak a similar dialect throughout Tibet. One of my interviewees, Zla-ba-blo-gros, said:

Many *Khamspa* or people from *Khams* are speaking a nomadic dialect in some places of Khams and their dialect is very similar to the Amdo dialect. Probably people from Amdo migrated to those places. However, it is a special case but it is not a general phenomenon. (Interview, December 2007)

As such, we cannot make any judgment on a group of people as to whether they are Amdoba or not according to what dialect they speak.

Geographic identification is the second method. Proponents of this method insist on historical Amdo and identify Amdo according to a general geographic location. They strongly maintain the traditional understanding of Amdo and assume historical Mdosmad was replaced by Amdo, even though today this historical region is now divided into different Chinese administrative divisions in different provinces of China.

The following information provides a basic profile of what Tibetans consider to be Amdo among current Chinese administrative divisions. There are still a large number of Tibetans living in the Amdo area although the Han Chinese population dominates those administrative divisions in the west of China, and there are also other ethnic groups living in these regions. Tibetans are the second largest ethnic group in Amdo. The total area using modern administrative divisions based on Guschke's (2001) analysis is:

The area of Amdo forms part of three present-day Chinese provinces. It occupies the bulk of Qinghai, the southwestern edge of Gansu and the northernmost grasslands of Sichuan. Historically it comprises the former kingdoms and tribal areas of Chone (*cone*) and Thewo (*the bo*), the Ngolok (*mgo lok*), Thrika (*khri kha*) and Sara Yugur (*'ban dha hor*) as well as the Tsaidam (*tsva'l 'dam*) and Hor Gyade (*hor rgya sde*) regions, the Tsongkha (*tsong kha*) and Rongwo (*rong po*) valleys and those of their tributaries, as well as the monastic state of Labrang. Nowadays, the administrative divisions take the ethnic structure of the population into account. That is why one finds the Haibei, Huangnan, Hainan, Ngolok and Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures (AP) and the Haixi Mongol-Tibetan-Kazakh AP in Qinghai, Gansu TAP and Tianzhu (then *kru 'u*, or *gling chu gser khab*) Tibetan Autonomous County (AC) in Gansu besides Ngawa (*nga pa*, Chin. *Aba*) Tibetan-Qiang AP in Sichuan province. The Ngawa Prefecture only partly belongs to Amdo, while the bigger part, together with the Kandse TAP, is considered to make up the east of Kham. (p.9)

We have to critically examine the aforementioned statements since Gruschke was not familiar with those regions. For instance, he mistakenly said Kanlho Tibet Autonomous Prefecture replaced by the name of Gansu Province within which Kanlho is a sub-administrative district, and he also used two different Tibetan names for the newly established Tianzhu (Chinese: 天祝) Tibetan Autonomous County (TAC). It is a common for Tibetans to call it Dpa'ris. However, Tibetans can clearly identify the new administrative names in terms of their geographical locations. Tibetans still frequently use the name Amdo to distinguish themselves from other Tibetans in Khams and in Dbusgtsang. They have also kept the tradition of calling someone Amdoba if they are from the region. One of my interviewees also mentioned that some *Mgologpas* might think Mgolog is not part of Amdo, but he argued that Mgolog people themselves think they are Amdobas. He continued to emphasize that Mgolog should be part of Amdo

geographically and linguistically. Today's Khams includes the Yulshul (Chinese: 玉树; pinyin: Yushu) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP) in Qinghai, the Nagchu (Chinese: 那曲 pinyin: Naqu) and Chabmdo (Chinese: 昌都; pinyin: Changdu) Prefectures in the Tibet Autonomous Region, most of the Dkarmdzes (Chinese: 甘孜; pinyin: Ganze) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan, and the Bdechen (Chinese: 德庆; pinyin: Deqing) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province. Having differentiated the two areas of Amdo and Khams in modern terminology I will not discuss Khams areas further in this study.

First, we will consider areas outside of what is now Qinghai Province. Gansu and Sichuan are home to 367,000 persons and 1.087 million⁵ registered Tibetans in 1951. The principal areas of Amdo inhabitation are the Rngaba (Chinese: 阿坝; pinyin: Aba) Tibetan and Ching (Chinese: 羌; pinyin: Qiang) Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province and the Kanlho (Chinese: 甘南; pinyin: Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Dp'aris Tibetan Autonomous County in Gansu Province.

'Barkhams (Chinese: 马尔康; pinyin: Ma er kang) Town is the capital of Rngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture (*Rngaba bod rigs dang chang rigs rang skyong khul*) in Sichuan. This prefecture covers 84,200 square kilometers. The total registered population of Tibetans by the end of 2007 in Rngaba was 874,000. Among them, the agricultural population is 689,000 people, and the nonagricultural population is 185,000 people. Tibetans occupied 55 percent of the total population. Qiang accounted for 18.7 percent, Chinese Muslim or Hui (Chinese: 回族; pinyin: Huizu) accounted for 3.3 percent, Han Chinese accounted for 22.5 percent, and other ethnic groups account for 0.5 percent of the total population. Rngaba is the second largest Tibetan inhabited region in Sichuan Province and the biggest Qiang populated area in China⁶. Tibetans who live in the Amdo part of this region speak *Am skad*.

The Kanlho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (*Kanlho bod rigs rang skyong khul*) consists of Han 汉, Hui 回, Turkish, Mongol, and 24 other ethnic groups and has a total registered population of 680,100 people, of which 367,000 are Tibetans, accounting for 54.0 percent of the total population. The agricultural population is 550,000, accounting for 80.9 percent of the total Tibetan population⁷. The Kanlho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture has an area of 40,898 km², and its capital is Gtsos in Tibetan or Hezuo 合作 in Chinese. It has one county level city (Hezuo) and seven counties, namely: Batse (Chinese: 临潭; pinyin: Lintan), Cone (Sound like Joni) (Chinese: 卓尼; pinyin: Zhuoni), 'Brugchu (Chinese: 舟曲; pinyin: Zhouqu), Thebo (Chinese: 迭部; pinyin: Diebu),

⁵ Guo D. (1997). Tibet's population and Tibetan population. Retrieved in May 2009 from <http://www.popline.org/docs/1245/131465.html> (This website is no longer available.)

⁶ Retrieved in May 2009 from: <http://www.abazhou.gov.cn/zjab/abgk-jbzbq.html> (This website is no longer available.)

⁷ Retrieved in June 2009 from:

<http://www.gn.gansu.gov.cn/content/gngk/index.asp?Parent=4&ClassTitle=地方文化&s=Y> (This website is no longer available.)

Rmachu (Chinese: 玛曲; pinyin: Maqu), Kluchu (Chinese: 碌曲; pinyin: Luqu), and Bsangchu (Chinese: 夏河; pinyin: Xiahe) counties. The last county is often known by Tibetans and westerners as Blabrang or Labrang. All these counties are primarily occupied by Tibetans except Lintan County. Tibetans from Cone, 'Brugchu and Thebo speak very unique dialects, which have little in common with the standard Amdo dialect. Tibetans in some villages of Kluchu County have a heavily accented local dialect and they may not be able to understand, nor be able to be understood by, *Am skad* speakers. In Kanlho, the majority of Tibetans are farmer and nomad; a small population of Tibetans is semi-farmer and semi-nomad.

Dpa'ris Tibetan Autonomous County is in the prefecture-level city of Wuwei (Chinese: 武威; Tibetan: Khartsan) in Gansu Province. It has an area of 7,147km² and approximately 230,000 inhabitants. Its administrative seat is the town of Rabrgyas (Chinese: 华藏寺; pinyin: Huazangsi). It is important to note that due to many factors, the majority of Tibetans in Dpa'ris County speak Mandarin Chinese rather than *Am skad*. There are two other Tibetan townships: Mati (马蹄) and Qifeng (祁丰) in Sunan Yuguzu Zizhixian (肃南裕固族自治县), Gansu Province.

It is not surprising that many people recognize Qinghai Province to be Amdo since Qinghai is the center of both historic and modern Amdo. The term Qinghai is a direct Chinese translation of the Tibetan name for *Mtshosngonpo* and it means 'blue lake'. This lake is also known by its Mongolian name Kokonor. Qinghai Province has six Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures and many other counties, township and villages. Many Tibetans also live in Ziling (or Xining 西宁), the capital of Qinghai province.

Mtshobyang (North of the Blue Lake) (Chinese: 海北; pinyin: Haibei) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (*Mtshobyang bod rigs rang skyong khul*) has an area of 39,354 km², and its capital is Nubmtsho (Chinese: 西海镇; pinyin: Xihai zhen) Town. The prefecture has four county-level divisions, namely: Mda'bzhi (Chinese: 海晏; pinyin: Haiyan), Mdola (Chinese: 祁连; pinyin: Qilian) and Rkangtsha (Chinese: 刚察; pinyin: Gangcha) counties and Minyon (Chinese: 门源; pinyin: Menyuan) Hui Autonomous County. Tibetans in Mtshobyang primarily speak standard *Am skad*. The majority of the Tibetan population here includes farmers and herders.

Mtsholho (South of the Blue Lake) (Chinese: 海南; pinyin: Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (*Mtsholho bod rigs rang skyong khul*) is another Tibetan area in Qinghai Province. The prefecture has an area of 45,895 km² and its capital is Chabcha (Chinese: 恰不恰; pinyin: Qiabuqia). The prefecture is subdivided into six counties: Chabcha or Gungho (Chinese: 共和; pinyin: Gonghe), 'Ba'rdzong or Thunte (Chinese: 同德; pinyin: Tongde), Khrika (Chinese: 贵德; pinyin: Guide), Zhinhe or Darmtsho (Chinese: 兴海; pinyin: Xinghai), and Mangra (Chinese: 贵南; pinyin: Guinan) counties. 'Ba'rdzong and Darmtsho counties are considered to be two pastoral areas, although each of these counties also has a small agricultural population. The other counties in Mtsholho TAP are primarily populated by villagers and nomad.

Mtshonub (West of Qinghai Lake) (Chinese: 海西; pinyin: Haixi) Mongol and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (*Mtshonub sog rigs and bod rigs rang skyong khul*) in Qinghai has an area of 325,785km² and its capital is Gterlenkha (Chinese: 德令哈; pinyin: Delingha). It covers two county-level cities and three counties, namely Gterlenkha and Nagormo (Chinese: 格尔木; pinyin: Geermu) cities and Wulan 乌兰, Dulan 都兰 and Themrtsong (Chinese: 天峻; pinyin: Tianjun) counties. Nagormo is famous as the Army City. This prefecture is heavily populated by the Han Chinese and army soldiers. Only Themrtsong County has a large number of Tibetans and they speak standard *Am skad*. As the name of the prefecture indicates, the other counties are primarily occupied by Mongolians and Tibetans.

Rmalho (South of the Yellow River) (Chinese: 黄南; pinyin: Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (*Rmalho bod rigs rang skyong khul*) in Qinghai Province has an area of 17,921 km², and its capital is Rongbo (the center of historic region of Rebgong) (Chinese: 隆务; pinyin: Longwu). The prefecture has four county-level subdivisions, namely: Rebgong (Chinese: 同仁; pinyin: Tongren), Gcantsha (Chinese: 尖扎; pinyin: Jianzha), and Rtsekhog (Chinese: 泽库; pinyin: Zeku) counties, and Rmalho (Chinese: 河南; pinyin: Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County. Rebgong and Gcantsha are home to Tibetans agricultural farmers and to a lesser extent nomadic and semi-nomadic populations. People from these two regions speak Amdo *rong skad*. The majority of of the population, both Tibetans and Mongolians, in Rtsekhog and Rmalho counties are nomadic herders and they speak perfect *Am skad*.

From the 1960s on, many young Tibetans in these counties have been educated in Tibetan language, and Tibetan traditional culture has experienced a rebirth here. Rebgong is particularly famous for its contemporary Tibetan literature and Thangkha art. Rebgong is also home to unique Tibetan Buddhist lay practitioners of the *sngags pa* (phonetic: ngakpa) and *sngags ma* (phonetic: ngakma) tradition. Rtsekhog and Rmalho counties are two purely nomadic areas, and people from these two places speak '*brog skad*. People from Rmalho (or Henan) are originally of Mongolian ethnicity. These people lost their own Mongolian language long ago and now almost the entire population speaks standard *Am skad*. Interestingly, many famous contemporary Tibetan writers are from Rmalho (or Henan).

Mgolog (Chinese: 果洛; pinyin: Guoluo) (English: Golok) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (*Mgolog bod rigs rang skyong khul*) in Qinghai Province has an area of 76,312 km², and its capital is Rtabo (Chinese: 大武; pinyin: Dawu) Town in Rmachen (Chinese: 玛沁; pinyin: Maqin) County. The prefecture has six county-level divisions: Rmachen, Padma (Chinese: 班玛; pinyin: Banma), Dga'bde (Chinese: 甘德; pinyin: Gande), Darlag (Chinese: 达日; pinyin: Dari), Gcigsgril (Chinese: 久治; pinyin: Jiuzhi), and Rmastod (Chinese: 玛多; pinyin: Maduo) counties. The total population is 153,600 people (of which 119,400 are herdsman and women) and the Tibetan population accounts for 90.95 percent of the prefecture's population. Due to the high altitude and rough weather, Golok

is the only Tibetan prefecture where few other ethnic groups reside. This region is not suitable for farming, so the majority of the population are herders. One can still find farms in Padma County, which borders Sichuan because the climate is as inhospitable as other places in Golok. *Mgologpa* (people from Golok) speak *Mgo skad* (Golok dialect), although it is very close to *Am skad*.

While we have looked at the geographic boundaries already, I would like to remind the reader that for this reason, some may argue Golok is not part of Amdo.

There are five counties within Haidong (Chinese: 海东; Tibetan: Mtshoshar) District and three counties within Xining City where many Tibetans reside. For instance, in Xunhua 循化 (Tibetan: Yatsi) and Hualong 化隆 (Tibetan: Bayan) counties there exists a certain number of Tibetans who speak Amdo *Rong skad*. These Tibetans are surrounded by two Chinese Muslim ethnicities: Hui (Chinese: 回) and Salar (Chinese: 萨拉; pinyin: Sala). In fact Xunhua is part of Salar Autonomous County and Hualong is in Hui Autonomous County. For many Hui in Hualong their mother tongue is Tibetan, but one can distinguish them from Tibetans by their clothing and culture.

A huge number of Chinese-speaking (Qinghai dialect) Tibetans live in Tsongkha (Chinese: 湟中; pinyin: Huangzhong), Stongkor (Chinese: 湟源; pinyin: Huangyuan), Datong 大通, Pingan 平安, Minghe 民和, Huzhu 互助 and Ledu 乐都 counties. As Huber (2002) argues, “a great many Amdo Tibetans live within the Haidong (Tib. Mtsho Shar) Prefecture of Qinghai which is located to the east of the Blue Lake (Mtsho sngon, Kokonor) and around Xining city, but they constitute only a minority (ca. 8.5%) of total population there and so the region did not attain TAP status” (p. xiii). These Tibetans have adopted Chinese language and culture with the exception of Grotshang (Tibetans who live in Ledu and Pingan counties) Tibetans who have maintained their own unique Tibetan dialect, which is completely different from *Amdo skad*. Some of these Tibetans have inherited religious beliefs and elements of Tibetan culture, but others have no sense of having a Tibetan identity. There are many reasons for these differences, which are both fascinating and may be addressed in future research, but are out of the range of my current research topic.

4.0 Summary

We can conclude that the term Amdo originates from the Tibetan term *mdo*. In Tibetan, this means the junction of valleys or rivers, lower lands, or the lower part of a valley where it merges with the plain. In the past, Tibetans used *Mdosmad* for this region, but later Amdo became a more popular name. *Mdomsad* means lower *mdo*, its opposite being *Mdostod*, which means upper *mdo*. The original *Mdostod* is called Khams today. Tibetans created a combined name for these two places, *Mdokhams* or Do-kham (or *Duogansi* in Chinese pinyin) in the 14th century under the Mongol Yuan dynasty. It is similar to the Tibetan usage of Dbusgtsang, where two place names, Dbus and Gtsang, were put

together. We can say this tradition is known to all Tibetan scholars. Without a doubt, the Tibetan term *Mdokhams* is a combination of terms rather than a separation of them.

It is important to consider the Tibetan letter *a-*, which also plays a significant role in trying to interpret the term Amdo. Although there are several popular explanations about the origin of *A-*, my research shows that it is a language habit in the Amdo region. Amdobas tend to attach letter *A-* to any letter or word when emphasizing a phoneme. In particular, they prefer to attach *A-* to single letter or word. (e.g. *A-lags Sprulsku* or *Rin po che*⁸ or a reincarnation). The majority of my interviewees strongly supported this idea, although they cannot point to its origin.

The second argument is Hermann's idea that the Tibetan letter *a-* refers to a rock. They argue that the name of Amdo may be explained as the “‘[Rmachu] river outlet near the A-shaped rock formation’” (Gruschke: 2001 p.12). The third opinion on the evolution of the term Amdo involves phonemic and linguistic origins. The primary representative of this hypothesis is Dge-‘dun-chos-‘phel. The Tibetan term Amdo is originally from *Mdo*. There is naturally an initial syllable *a-* in front of *mdo* because people emphasize the sound of word *Mdo* when they read it clearly. Janhunen (2001) concluded that the *a-* is of unknown origin, possibly similar to the kinship usage of *a-* described above.

Many of my interviewees also agreed with Dge-‘dun-chos-‘phel’s argument. They have said that Tibetans often attach *a-* before a word such as *a-glu ba* (singer) and *asgrolma* (a woman’s name). Tibetans also believe that *a-* is the soul of the Tibetan alphabet. They assume that all Tibetan alphabets have hidden the sound *a-*, and that *a-* can support other words to strengthen or emphasize their meaning. Sometimes *a-* also assists pronunciation of another word. Therefore, *a-* plays a critical role in Tibetan language. Despite recent research by other scholars there is no agreement on the origins of the Tibetan term Amdo. It is my conclusion that there is no hidden meaning for the Tibetan letter *a-*. The general population and even popular language suggests that Amdo is a merging of the Tibetan letter *a-* and Tibetan word *Mdo*.

The question about when Tibetans started to use the term Amdo is still unknown. So far Shar Skal-Idan-rgya-mtsho is the earliest recorded person who used this term, meaning that the word entered usage at least as early as the 17th century. Later Brag-dgon-pa used Amdo in his book, written in the 19th Century, and tried to explain the origin of the term.

While reading these arguments and interviewing people in Amdo, I noticed that there is a language habit or practice in Amdo. Amdobas customarily add *a-* in front of words (particularly a single word or letter). This tendency may not be found in central Tibet because there are and were multi-ethnic communities in historic Amdo. These groups may have influenced each other, as they do today, through communication and interaction. This can result in influences on each other's languages and speaking habits.

⁸ Other Tibetans call a reincarnation as *sprul sku* (Tuku) or *rin po che*. In Amdo Tibetan use *a-lags* to refer or address a reincarnation.

For instance, some Tibetans in Amdo refer to father as *a-ta*. This *a-ta* is from another language, which uses the term *dada* for father. We can find many factors that indicate a mixture of other cultures or languages in Amdo.

The origin of the Tibetan term Amdo is *Mdosmad*. *Mdo* is both East Tibet and in the vast areas beyond the Dbusgtsang. I have already described the territorial distinctions and geography of Amdo (past and present) above. Beyond the origin of the term, Amdo as a geographical and cultural region is also difficult to define and explain. As Gruschke argued (2001), “[W]e should rather speak of Amdo and Khams in the sense of ‘cultural or geographical provinces’ of Tibet. During the 18th century, Amdo even created the impression of being at least relatively autonomous, if not independent” (p. 8).

It is wise to investigate the Tibetan term Amdo continually until we come to an agreed-upon conclusion. My research is intended to focus on the historical and social background of the term Amdo and the geographic region it identifies. So far, we cannot find a comprehensive history of Amdo or other regions of Tibet beyond Dbusgtsang. I noticed that Hor-gtsang ‘Jigs-med, A Tibetan scholar who lives in India, wrote a book titled *History of Amdo*, I was unable to access to his book because I could not find this book in China and Finland. One of my Tibetan friends in New York briefly read ‘Jigs-med’s book, and he told me that he did not find any new ideas about the term Amdo in this book. He also informed me that this book contains collections of Tibetan tribal history in Amdo. The writing style of this book is very similar to Brag-dgon-pa’s *The Religious History of Amdo*. That is another reason why it is so hard to define what the term Amdo refers to in Tibetan history. We should also be cognizant that the Amdo region was not, and still is not, inhabited only by Tibetans. In different historical periods, other nations or ethnic groups became the leading nation or group in Amdo. As such, we cannot label all people who live in Amdo currently and historically as Tibetan. My research focuses on Tibetan culture in this region and has tried to understand this term in a Tibetan context. It must be recognized that Amdo is a multicultural region, and my intention in undertaking this research is not to ignore the other cultures coexisting there but to look at Tibetan Amdo in reference to Tibetan history and culture. It is critical that other scholars conduct research on the other ethnic groups in Amdo so that we can gain a fuller understanding of Amdo, as it was in the past and is at present.

CHAPTER 2

FOOD, CLOTHING, AND SHELTER AMONG TIBETANS IN AMDO

1.0 Introduction

Some friends and I were recently sitting at a restaurant table having modern Tibetan food and milk tea. We were discussing many different subjects, and one of the questions we asked ourselves was why Tibetan students from a nomadic background seem to be better able to adapt to new ideas than students from an agricultural background can. This observation seemed to contradict what we would normally assume. Tibetan *'brog pa*, or nomads, live very isolated lives. Because they move several times a year and spend most of their time tending to their herds, they are not normally exposed to new ideas. One of my friends suggested that the very fact that nomads move frequently is what makes them more receptive to new ideas. My friend described the nomads' minds as being "as endless as the sky or as big as a pastoral land." In contrast, Tibetan *rong ba* (pronounced rong wa), or people of the valley, are more conservative. For the purposes of this discussion, we will refer to these people as peasants. They tend to hang on to their customs and traditions because they are permanently settled. Therefore, these two groups of Tibetan students, while they share much in common and encounter the same external forces at universities and in the cities, exhibit very different personalities and points of view.

Some of my other friends argued that the differences between the nomads and the peasants might be caused by their diverse economic situations. My friends believe the students from nomadic backgrounds have more financial resources than the villagers do. This puts the nomadic students at an advantage when they are in a modern environment, like a Chinese city, for example. This debate raises several questions regarding Tibetan social and cultural changes as they are compared in nomadic and agricultural in Amdo.

We all know that the Chinese Cultural Revolution brought profound changes to many aspects of Tibetan culture. These changes are obvious when you walk around Tibet. The most striking difference these days is that there are many more Han Chinese living in Amdo than there are Tibetans. Religious practices have changed. What about Tibetans' daily lives? How have the Tibetans' daily lives changed since 1950s? In what ways are Tibetans living differently? How have these differences affected what today's Tibetans eat, what today's Tibetans wear, and what types of homes they live in?

These questions might seem simple to both Tibetans and non-Tibetans alike. However, no one has been able to provide definitive answers. Tibetans and others realize that Tibetan culture and livelihood is rapidly changing, but only a few people are really

paying attention to and documenting this transition. It is vital to all future anthropological research on Tibet to understand how Tibetans' daily lives have changed up to this point so that we can better understand where today's Tibetans are going. This is especially true in Amdo.

When we examine the emerging trends in food, clothing, and shelter in Amdo, it is also necessary to review how Tibetan social structure has changed during the past 60 years. This review includes the Chinese government's policies in the Tibetan areas of China. These policies have affected Tibetans' livelihoods, their perspectives on life, and their values. For example, the market economy has brought both opportunities and challenges to Tibetans. What Tibetans wear, what they eat, and the kinds of homes they live in have been profoundly influenced by non-Tibetans. These outside influences include the Han Chinese who are moving into the area and the large numbers of international tourists who visit Tibet each year. Development workers have also brought their own cultural influences into the region.

Traditionally, Tibetans in Amdo have been divided into two groups: peasants and nomads. These two groups each had their own autonomous tribes (*tsho ba*)⁹. A tribe can have subdivisions of clans or confederations (*sde ba* or *ru skor*). There is one recognized chief at the tribe level, and there are leaders of each of the clans. A lineage (*tshang*) was, and is, the basic social unit that ties all the families together. Within this system, production centered on the family, and families formed the basic unit of social life. Women did the bulk of continuous food production, child rearing, and housework, while men were responsible for the outdoor work (animal herding, farming, war, and trade). Social rituals were, and are, often organized by the men in the clan.

Prior to the establishment of the People's Commune¹⁰ (Chinese: 人民公社; pinyin: Renmin gongshe) in 1958, the Tibetan production model was familial, self-sufficient subsistence. Both nomad and peasants could produce most of the basic goods their families needed, and both groups traded grains for meats annually. They interacted with others primarily because of this trade. The peasants' crop rotation system produced

⁹ Traditionally, in Amdo Tibetans use the place names to indicate the highest level of a group unit. For example, Mgolog is place name and it is also the name of the highest unit (it divided into old house and new house or *khang rgan* and *khang gsar*) in this region. Rebgong is a place name and it is the name of an alliance of tribes (It has 12 tribes, *hpyogs kha bcu gnyis* or *shog kha bcu gnyis*) in this region. Rongbo is one of the 12 tribes. It has seven villages, and each village has several clans (or *tsho bas*). A clan may have several lineages (or *tshang*). The nomadic tribe Arigs use *tsho ba* to refer to the tribe, and a tribe has many camps and clans (*tshang*). Usually the members of the clan stay in the same camps unless their members are married to other clans. It is important to note that different groups of Amdobas use different terminology and that there may be some variation within groups.

¹⁰ The Peoples' Commune was made official state policy in 1958 after Mao Zedong visited an unofficial commune in Henan. The people's commune (Chinese: 人民公社; pinyin: rénmin gōngshè) was the highest of three administrative levels in rural areas of the People's Republic of China during the period of 1958 to 1982-85 until they were replaced by townships. Communes, the largest collective units, were divided in turn into production brigades and production teams. The communes had governmental, political, and economic functions. (Retrieved in April 2012 from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_commune)

regular, highly consistent yields. Both farmers and nomads ensured their food security by maintaining or expanding their herd size or their means for storing wheat and barley.

A family belonged to a village, and a local landlord was responsible for governing several villages. In nomadic areas, the camp leader (Tibetan: *ru skor rgan po*) would directly coordinate the social life of the village. He inherited power from his family, and a person's wealth was often connected to that person's level of leadership. The village leaders (Tibetan: *sde dpon*) were usually the most powerful men in the villages. Both nomads and farmers had local high-ranking rulers called a local king or leader (Tibetan: *dpon po*). A local *dpon po* rules several villages and has a large territory.

Traditional Tibetan social structure was restructured when the Chinese established the People's Commune. The Chinese central government developed a collective communal system throughout China, including in the Tibetan nomadic and agricultural areas. The Chinese government seized land and property from the wealthy in order to redistribute land and property and to destroy the presence of social classes. In Tibetan areas, local people worked in a collective commune, and, they were not permitted to own private property. Land, animals, and grain all belonged to the government. Pierre Clastres (1977) observed, "[...] the emergence of the state, and the enforced incorporation of non-state peoples into the state, as the most important watershed in cultural history" (in Eriksen, 2001, p.170). The system was based on the belief that people worked for the government because the land and other property belonged to the government, and the government fed the people.

Under the Chinese communist system, there were no poor or rich people, but there were still social strata of people. Class struggle became the principal directive of social life during the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976). As Eriksen (2001) said, "Society exists through its institutions: when they cease to function, society changes in sometimes fundamental ways" (p. 64).

The first and most significant change for Tibetans was in their religious beliefs. Local people were forced to give up old ideologies and religious beliefs that emphasized the next life and enlightenment. They were forced to accept the new ideology that emphasized this life and the realization of the communist goals. Many local people remember that they were shocked and terrorized due to this radical and abrupt change in social values and that they acted in ways that were previously unthinkable, including beating monks and destroying monasteries. As Sgrol-ma observed, "It was unbelievable that people beat lamas and tore down temples. They were really led by a crazy communist dream" (Interview, December 2008). Many Tibetans were also happy with their new power and believed they now had a third eye with which to see the world.

When the Communist Party prohibited religious faith, some Tibetans became communist comrades. Some of them accepted the new ideologies and actively sought to destroy their traditional religion and culture. Many poor people were happy about their new power and put rich people or class enemies (intellectuals, monks, etc.) into jail in the

name of class struggle. This was a psychologically damaging and destructive period for the Tibetan people.

The local production system became the People's Commune, and the government tried to plant grains on grasslands and build factories in some areas in Amdo. These efforts failed, and the government abandoned its initial policies. Local people continued to herd their livestock and plough their lands after their obligations after they completed their new "chores," which included studying Mao's writings and criticizing religion and "old" ideologies. Tibetan farmers started to wear *rgya lwa*¹¹ or modern clothing because the government had requested this of young people. Tibetan men had to cut their long hair in order to conform to Chinese norms, and women had to remove their hair ornaments. As Tshul-blo et al. (1996) describes the new trends of clothing and hairstyles in the Mgaritse tribe in Amdo from 1950 to 1991:

There was the change of social structure and the form of production labor, so local people simplified their clothes and ornaments. For men, certain time they cut their pig-tail and had Chinese style hair called 'new head' or '*hphen thig*.' They gave up handmade leather shoes, trousers, and Tibetan style jackets, and it was popular to wear clothes and shoes, which are made in China. In certain periods, people were keen to wear Tibetan robes and baseball hats and shoes made in China. Later, men had long hair and wore a horn like trouser and high-heeled shoes. Again, they cut their long hair and gave up smoking and alcohol. They also started to wear Tibetan clothes and hold rosaries in their hands, and continued to keep the tradition of reciting Mani. For women, they gave up silver ornament and lambskin hat, and to wear fox skin hat and felt hat, there was no ornament on the head. Later the Chinese baseball hat replaced the felt hat [...]. (p. 193)

Many Tibetans became members of the Chinese Communist Party. The Chinese government encouraged this by offering jobs to people who wanted to work for the government. The government also established many new schools and recruited many Tibetan students who received free education and free seasonal *rgya lwa* or modern style clothes.

The government also constructed a few state-run shops in Tibetan areas in order to redistribute goods from inner China. These stores usually sold basic commodities, and people could only purchase items if they had a government-issued certificate or ticket. In particular, there were limits on the amounts of grain and clothing sold to buyers. At the time, people did not need much money. An old Tibetan man, Rgya-mtsho, said, "You could not buy anything even if you had lot of money at that time" (Interview, December 2008). A lack of financial resources prevented material cultural change among Tibetans for many decades.

Even when new fabrics and new types of food, and new types of shelter became available in Tibetan areas, few Tibetans adopted these new items quickly. One of my childhood friends was shocked the first time he learned that the Han Chinese ate eggs and

¹¹ *Rgya lwa* "Chinese clothes" refers to universal-style clothing including coats, jackets, suits, shirts, skirts, trousers and underwear.

built houses on grasslands. While some Tibetans in the towns began to consume Chinese foods or vegetables and wore uniforms, ordinary farmers also began to wear modern clothing. In some cases, local Tibetans found that new kinds of fabrics had become available such as nylons and silks. The “Red Guards”¹² of the Chinese Cultural Revolution forced local people to accept new ideologies, but they did not have enough resources to force people to change what they ate or the types of housing they lived in. In some cases, people were required to change their clothing from traditional to modern styles. As Dkon-mchog-chos-‘phel, an old villager from Rdobis Township¹³ described, “During the Cultural Revolution they [activists] asked us to change our clothing, but there is no *rgya hwa* available at that time” (Interview, October 2010). Tshul-blo et al. (1996) also stated, “They [the Chinese] forced men to cut their pig-tails and women to unfasten their braids. Both men and women had to give up traditional ornaments. [...] Traditional customs were changed totally [in Mgarrtse Tribe]” (p. 236).

As we know, nothing lasts forever, and governments face and resolve problems according to how people, events, and situations evolve. The Chinese government finally realized the importance of economic development, and under Deng Xiaoping (邓小平 1904-1997), it began to initiate a “reform and opening policy” in 1979. As Goldstein et al. (2006) pointed out:

In Tibet, this [decollectivization] was normally done on a per capita basis. Once land division was implemented, the basic productive resource – arable land – was typically fixed in the household. Children born after land division did not (and still do not) receive land, and households, and with a few exceptions, have no way to increase their holdings, because land cannot be bought and sold. Households, therefore, essentially hold their land indefinitely, albeit on an unspecified long-term lease arrangement. (pp. 197-198)

In Amdo, the government implemented the same policies. Every family had a right to manage their land and property according to the local regulations. The level of taxation depended on the amount of acreage and the number of animals a family had. The Chinese government has recently tried to reduce the taxes collected from nomads and farmers. However, this is a national policy, which has been implemented by local authorities. There is variation in the ways in which the local authorities have implemented these changes. While decollectivization in China did not mean privatization, the local people had a chance to accumulate property and wealth if they worked hard and effectively managed and maintained their animals and farmland.

¹²Red Guards (simplified Chinese: 红卫兵; traditional Chinese: 紅衛兵; pinyin: Hóng Wèibīng) were a mass paramilitary social movement of young people in the People's Republic of China (PRC), who were mobilized by Mao Zedong in 1966 and 1967, during the Cultural Revolution. (Retrieved in July 2012 from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Guards_\(China\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Guards_(China)))

¹³ The different levels of administration in China today are: province (Chinese: 省; pinyin: Sheng); city (Chinese: 市; pinyin: Shi); prefecture (Chinese: 州; pinyin: Zhou); county (Chinese: 县; pinyin: Xian); town (Chinese: 镇; pinyin: Zhen); township (Chinese: 乡; pinyin: Xiang) and village (Chinese: 村; pinyin: Cun.)

However, the Chinese economic system as it was structured at the time did not provide for many opportunities or markets where private business owners or farmers could sell their goods. Therefore, even with decollectivization, many farmers and small businesspeople sold their goods to the government. Local people would buy supplies from state-run shops and sell their products to state-run trading groups. This was the so-called “the state planned economy”¹⁴ that was implemented in Tibetan areas in the 1980s. Tibetans were also granted more freedom to practice their religion, although this change occurred gradually. Many Tibetans were eager to express their uniqueness by wearing traditional clothes and by practicing their religion. For more than 20 years, they had not been allowed the right to believe in anything but Communism.

At the same time, capital was becoming a very important element of life, and some small businesses began to emerge in Tibetan areas in Amdo. Most of the first small business owners in Tibetan areas were Muslims. The Muslim population had been doing business in Tibetan areas well before the 1940s, so they were able to take advantage of the opportunity to set up small businesses as soon as the opportunities presented themselves. Muslims have controlled the trade of animal products and have weakened the trading power of nomads.

Ekvall (1977) concluded that the mutual diffusion of cultural traits between Tibetan nomads and Muslims was due to trade and the cultural contact (p. 49). Historically Muslims were accustomed to trading with Tibetans, but they had never built stores and restaurants in Tibetan areas until the 1970s because “the government provided 9 kilos of grain for per person per month in the 1970s, and sold 10 kilos of grain for per person per month in the 1980s, and one third of that is flour” (Tshul-blo, et al. 1996, p. 335). Traditionally, nomads dominated the trade between farmers and herders since they had animal products, horses, and yaks for transportation and for carrying goods.

In the 1990s, the Chinese policy shift to “a market economy” from “a planned economy” dramatically affected many aspects of Tibetan life. Tibetans have taken advantage of the new policy and have learned how to follow the changes in government policies. Since its renunciation of the state planned economy, the Chinese government's principal aim has been to develop the national economy. As Zheng (1999) observed, “According to Deng [Xiaoping], whether China could have a rightful place in the world of nations depends on China's domestic economic development”(p. 17). The growth of a state education system and a capitalist market influenced Tibetan life in different ways.

¹⁴ A planned economy is an economic system in which decisions regarding production and investment are embodied in a plan formulated by a central authority, usually by a government agency. (Retrieved July 2012 from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planned_economy)

2.0 Two Basic Lifestyles of Amdobas

2.1 The 'Brog pa

The 'brog pa's, or nomadic, economy relies heavily on large herds of yak and sheep. These herds provide meat, milk, wool, and hides, and these products can be traded to meet their other needs. Ekvall (1977) observes, "Among Tibetans... practically every head of a family takes part in the annual journey to the border to trade for the year's supply of grain" (p. 31).

Women generally milk female yaks and are primarily responsible for producing and maintaining the family's food supply and for doing other housework. Men usually herd the livestock and are responsible for social activities, and decisions regarding migration and trade. Women have the power to barter their food products such as butter and cheese for goods carried by the Chinese peddlers (Chinese: 货郎; pinyin: Huolang) (These are Chinese traveling peddlers who travel to remote areas to sell fruit, plastic containers, children's toys, and other small items).

'Brog pa mainly produce their own staple white foods, including milk, butter, cheese, and yogurt. For both the *brog pa* and *rong ba*, the primary staple food is tsampa (Tibetan: *rtsam pa*). Tsampa is a kind of dough that consists of roasted barley flour, yak butter, and dried cheese. To make tsampa in Amdo, the highland barley roasted or dried and then ground, with the husk on, into flour with a *lag skor*, which is a handheld grinding stone. In agricultural areas, a water mill is used to grind the barley into flour.

There are many ways to eat tsampa but the most common way to consume it is in a bowl with butter and hot tea. The ingredients are mixed in the bowl, then the dough is eaten with the hands, and the tea is drunk separately. It is not only the staple Tibetan food, but is also the symbol of Tibet. As many Tibetans argue, "You are not a Tibetan if you are not a tsampa eater." We can also see examples of this symbolism among the exile community, which often refers to their activist activities as the Tsampa Revolution.

Tsampa is still a popular food in Tibet, but many younger Tibetans, especially those who have grown up in cities, do not seem to like it.

During the spring and fall, nomadic women often find time to collect *gro ma*. This is a type of red sweet fruit that can be found underground. This is boiled for several hours and can be eaten with rice, butter, and sugar. This kind of food is called *gro'bras*. The term means *gro ma* and rice, and people only have it on special occasions such as on the lunar New Year or at a wedding banquet.

Tea has an important role in the Tibetan diet, and normally Tibetans make tea with milk and brick tea or *Zung ja*¹⁵. The milk tea is called "white tea or milk tea" (Tibetan: *ja dkar* or '*o ja*) and it is boiled for a long time. Then milk is added, and it is boiled again. People also make black tea (Tibetan: *ja nag* or *ja thang*) when they do not have milk, and

¹⁵ *Zung ja* is kind of tea from Songpan (松潘). It is usually packed in a 25 kilo box.

they also make boiled tea in a teapot. In some places, people like to add salt to the tea because they think it improves the taste. Neither nomads nor peasants in Amdo make butter tea and sweet tea, which are popular among Tibetans in central Tibet. Tea making is continuous work for women in Amdo because it is a part of their housework.

In most households, the women work at home and produce the white foods, which is essentially anything but meat, while the men graze animals and kill their livestock to produce the red foods. This is because men are responsible for slaughtering animals. Male nomads often had to travel far away to buy grains from peasants or town markets until the Chinese government began to provide grains to the households. As Ekvall (1977) observed:

Grain for food is imported in large quantities, and barley is the one item, which is never carried by the traders going into the Tibetan country, but is secured by the Tibetans themselves when they go down to the border to trade. Tea is so important that it is in a class by itself. (p. 33)

Today, the local market is full of a wide variety of grains, which are brought by businessmen rather than by state-run “grains stores.” Gradually, the state-run grains stores lost their domination, and some of them were closed in the 1990s. This market has now been taken over by local businessmen. These businessmen have introduced new cooking equipment to the Tibetan people, and this has changed the way some Tibetans cook their food.

One of the most important trends to emerge in Tibet in the past three decades was the iron cooking stove. In nomadic communities, women used to build earthen stoves at their location. These stoves had three heads and two holes on the two bottom sides. Most nomadic families today use iron stoves that they transport with them. One herder, ‘Brug-lha, stated:

Now we use Chinese made iron stoves to cook instead of using the traditional Tibetan earthen stoves. We used to use an iron stove with a shape similar to our traditional earthen stove. Now we use a new shaped Chinese iron stove. (Interview, September 2007)

Traditionally most kitchen utensils are made with wood, copper, or lead. One elderly Tibetan woman, Mtsho-gces (from Rmachu county), recounted:

Our kitchen utensils were mainly made with copper. The teapot and cooking pan were all made of copper. I did not see an aluminum teapot or cooking pan until the Chinese came to our place. Food was served in a wooden bowl. Everyone had his or her own wooden bowl. I have heard that people in Golok and Rmachu did not offer food or tea to a guest if he or she did not bring a bowl. (Interview, November 2007)

Nomadic families normally relocate four times within a year. They usually have summer, winter, spring, and autumn pastures. Often they will stay a longer time in their summer and winter pastures. Summer is the time to produce yak butter and store it in sheepskin and yak/sheep dried-stomach-bags and to collect cheese in a woolen or skin bag (Tibetan:

sgye or *sgye mo*). Supplies prepared in this way are expected to last through the winter and into the next summer, which was when the female yaks start to produce milk again. Today, people prefer to use fabric or plastic bags because they can buy them easily and cheaply at their local market, though these bags are not very useful for storing butter for long periods of time. For this reason, Tibetan butter dealers still prefer to buy butter with traditional bags since they can keep butter fresh for longer periods.

One significant lifestyle change among the majority of nomadic communities has been the end to seasonal migration. Nomads have been forced into settlements built by the local governments, or they have moved into towns and cities on their own. This lifestyle change has had profound effects on nomadic Tibetans. Instead of moving four times a year, nomads now move twice a year, in the winter and summer. A household responsibility system was introduced in the 1980s and 1990s. Grassland areas have been divided up into lots, and each family now has a small plot of land. Because they stay in one place more, many families have fenced in their lands to prevent other families from grazing their herds on land that is not theirs. Fenced-in pastures have resulted in significant timesaving, which allows nomads to travel to towns and villages to explore different types of foods.

Most Tibetans have three or four meals per day. Nomads mainly eat *tsampa* for breakfast, *tsampa* and yogurt for lunch, and meat and *thug pa* for dinner. A typical *thug pa* or noodle dish is '*then thug*', which is a mixture of Tibetan noodles and meat soup that keeps the nomads warm during the long winter nights.

This brings us back to the original question of why nomads seem to be more open-minded to new things. In terms of food preparation, nomads have more exposure to new foods and cooking techniques because they are nomads and are always required to adapt to whatever environment they are in. A Tibetan nomad woman, Sgrol-ma-skyid, had this to say about emerging food trends:

Our food has really changed a lot. Traditionally our foods were wheat flour, meat, *rtsam pa*, and bread. We only had grains in the past. For nomads butter and cheese are edible. When I was young, we had *gtul ma*¹⁶ (another way to make *tsampa*) for breakfast and *tsampa* for lunch. Sometimes we had *tsampa* again before dinner. Usually people had meat, noodles, or *tshil mog mog* [steamed stuffed bun] for dinner. (Interview, December, 2007)

In nomadic areas, flour and rice were scarce until the end of the 1990s, and nomads ate meat without other foods. It was hard to find vegetables in the high plateaus before the

¹⁶ There are two ways to eat *rtsam pa* or *tsampa*. One called *gtul ma* or *ja bsres* and one first fills a bowl half full with roasted barley flour and dry cheese, then puts a little butter in the empty side of the bowl and pours hot tea on the butter side. Usually Tibetans eat *gtul ma* for breakfast without making it into dough. The second way to eat *rtsam pa* is that one first puts a big piece of butter into a bowl and then pours hot tea on the butter to melt it. After the butter is almost melted one can put roasted barley flour into the bowl and blend flour with butter and tea. People knead this mixture in the bowl into a dough before eating it.

1980s, though businessmen brought some fruits to many town markets in the 1970s. 'Brug-lha, a herdsman, described current cooking habits in his home region:

We cook vegetables for lunch if we have time. One could not imagine cooking so many vegetables when I was young. Long ago people just cooked noodles and meat together. Our foods changed a lot if I have a look back at our childhood. Today we also put many vegetables in our noodles for dinner. And it is increasingly common for a nomadic family to have bread during breakfast and lunch. (Interview, September 2007)

Nomads' tastes in food are changing fast. Today they do not cook *ldur ri*, a flour soup with small pieces of meat. Many people like to fry food and use a lot of seasoning because oil, soy sauce, vinegar, ginger, etc. are available in town markets. In the past, nomads only fried the bread they used for special ceremonies. Traditionally, tsampa and meat were the staples in Tibetan culture. It appears the younger generations of nomads have become tired of tsampa, and have tried to enrich their meals with other foods. As Mtsho-gces, a woman from Rmachu County said:

Today people like to have breads for breakfast, and young folk do not even know what *gtul ma* is. They often ask to have butter, which means to have tsampa. They love to cook different kinds of vegetables for lunch. People used to make *nang khyo* [Tibetan sausage with/without animal blood]. Now people do not like to eat *nang khyo*. So, they throw away the blood and cook vegetables or fried-momo with the intestines. Only a few people still practice the *nang khyo* tradition. Before, a family would give some *nang khyo* and pieces of meat to their neighbors. Few families still keep this tradition. People are changing. It is now rare to give something to others. (Interview, November 2007)

This statement not only demonstrates how nomads are becoming white eaters, but it also hints that the change of food affects the traditional way of interaction between neighbors. The norms of reciprocity have been replaced by profit-oriented thinking, and the collective relationships between people have been eroded by individualism and self-interest.

It seems that Tibetan nomads enrich their meals with new ingredients such as vegetables, but they do not totally give up their traditional food culture. These new ingredients may eventually influence the style of nomadic cooking and food production activities.

These changes can also be seen in the domestic decisions that women make, both with regard to changes in diet from meat to vegetables and in changes in household production. All of this has happened because of the power of the market economy and the desire for economic development. Tibetan women in some places in Amdo now prefer to sell their yak milk rather than make butter with it. They believe that they get more money and have more free time if they just sell their milk. A Tibetan nomadic woman may need to spend one fifth of her day making butter. Some Tibetans are critical of this trend and criticize the women who do it for being lazy. They also complain that when the women are not making butter, they have to reduce the consumption of their staple foods, such as

tsampa. Such decisions are rarely the result of one aspect alone, but are instead caused by many factors, including the emergence of a market economy and improved infrastructure. When I asked some nomads why they eat vegetables today, some Tibetan nomads said that they follow their lamas' advice, and they are afraid of killing animals. Byams-pa, a professor from Qinghai University of Nationalities, stated:

Particularly, the wedding banquet is different now; people tend to organize *dkar khyab* or white banquet (vegetarian) since they cannot afford a traditional wedding, which uses a lot of meat. Some traditions are not easy to change. For example, a wedding banquet. (Interview, December 2007)

2.2 Destruction of Nomadic Life

More and more people in China are finding economic wealth to be more important, and Tibetans are not exempt from this trend. It is clear that local government policies have affected how and where nomads live. In the 1970s, the Qinghai Province government tried to support nomadic settlement but the progress was slow. Starting in 1981, and increasing in 1984, the Department of Animal Husbandry of Qinghai invested large amounts of money to implement three (or four)-fold policies of grassland management plans. The four-fold policy is 1) nomadic settlement, 2) fenced-in areas, 3) grass planting, and 4) animal shelter building. The government's policy is a major reason why nomads have built permanent homes for themselves and their animals in their winter locations. In some cases, nomads have become town residents after the government designated their grasslands as protected areas.

The Three Rivers Nature Reserve (Sanjiangyuan ziran baohuqu 三江源自然保护区), (the three rivers: Yangtze River, Yellow River and Lancang River) was established in 2000, and it covers an area of 152,300 km² in four Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures (Yulshul, Golok, Mtsholho, and Rmalho) and 14 counties, and Gdangslha Township of Gormo City in Qinghai Province. It is about 21% of the total area of Qinghai Province. The goal of this nature reserve is to balance the ecosystem in this region in order to protect the water resources for China. The strategy or method for this project is to reduce grazing and remove nomadic families from this region to relocate them in nomadic ecological settlement camps or communities in other regions. Here, the nomads do not have animals to herd, but they receive government financial support for three years. When the three-year period is up, the nomads have to become financially responsible for themselves. Many settlement houses are still empty because nomads have not wanted to move into them.

While government officials have gained from implementing settlement projects, most of the nomads in the area have not benefitted at all. Some settlement houses are occupied by children and the elderly because nomadic families hope that their children

can receive a good education, and grandparents are often given the task of looking after children who go to schools in the towns. Other settlement communities are active because the government relocated a community of nomads as a unit. Nomadic settlements have also influenced the nomads' diets, and they are eating less meat and more vegetables and processed foods. They began to make milk tea with packaged milk that they purchase from shops.

Traditionally, Tibetans assume that peasants are more selfish and conservative than nomads because of the scarcity of resources, deeply ingrained in traditional culture, and demographic density. It is also true that peasants cannot avoid the influence of consuming new foods, and they feel an improvement in life when they see a variety of foods and beverages on their dinner tables.

The market economy has narrowed the gap between rural and urban food cultures, and peasants can now consume foods from different parts of China. Peasants have traditionally relied on local sources of food, such as barley and wheat. Most peasants considered meat and milk products to be luxury items, though many families raise one or two *mdzo mo*, a hybrid of ox and yak, to produce milk for milk tea and butter.

In order to achieve a better balance, a small number of Tibetans practice a lifestyle that is a hybrid of the nomadic and agricultural lifestyles. The model of semi-nomad and semi-farmer (Tibetan: *rong ma 'brog*) is only popular in few areas of Amdo, though it is an ideal model for food production. The problem with this model is that it requires diverse labor forces and a different skill set from the workers, which the family may not be able to afford. This lifestyle is more labor intensive, and therefore Tibetans have tended to become either nomadic herdsman or sedentary farmers. The authentic peasant is called *Rong ba* in the Tibetan language.

2.3 The Rong Ba

The Tibetan agricultural villagers, or *rong ba*, cultivate both barley and wheat according to the carrying capacity of their land. Traditionally, peasants had to meet their other needs such as meat, butter, and cheese through trading their barley with the *'brog pa*, or nomads. The peasants' economic situation was and is worse than that of nomads because the herders' products often have a higher competitive market value than agricultural products.

The potato has been the only staple vegetable food for Tibetan farmers for many years. Recently farmers have been able to acquire the skills needed for growing and cooking vegetables from residents of towns and cities close to their homes. Tibetan farmers believe that they have better lives than before, although they are uncertain about their abilities to adequately compete in a market-oriented society.

Tibetan farmers still use iron plowshare (or ploughs) that are pulled by *mdzos*, mules, or horses. Recently walking tractors have replaced *mdzos*, yaks, and mules in

many Tibetan agricultural areas because of government initiatives to promote new technology among the local peasants. The peasants have also been encouraged by local government officials to use chemical fertilizers, and while it is expensive, peasants have seen an improvement in their harvests. At the same time, however, it is also interesting that the nomads have begun to complain about the taste of their tsampa. One must wonder if the use of chemical fertilizers has caused this change. It is also unfortunate now that fertilizers have caused damage to the soil, and some peasants find that they can no longer grow their crops without it.

Rong bas also consume tsampa, but they have bread and tea for breakfast and again for lunch. For dinner, the *rong bas* often have milk noodles or noodles with meat if it is available. Women are responsible for the cooking, and men do most of the farming. *Rong bas* have their own uniquely designed earthen stoves, but in many cases, iron stoves have replaced them, and some peasant homes even use gas stoves. Peasants who have been visited by NGOs working in the area have also been able to take advantage of solar cookers that have been provided to them. This has resulted in substantial time savings for many people.

The changes in dietary habits began earlier for many *rong bas* because they have been closer to the large towns or cities. Some remote *rong bas* still maintain traditional diets because they are far away from the towns and have a relatively poor economic situation. In other words, they maintain their traditional diets because they do not have the purchasing power or easy access to new foods. One 30-year-old woman, Klu-mo, from Bayan County, stated:

We had bread and tea for breakfast and lunch when I was a little girl. Local folks cook noodles with *da ra* [or curd]. Local people cook bread by burning grass. People still do it the same way. A funny thing is that wives should serve *kha dros* [warm-up tea] to whole family members when they were still in bed at dawn. But now this has disappeared. (Interview, December 2007)

An observation of a Tibetan professor, Byams-pa, shows a different perspective towards the factor of diet in a Tsongkha village. He said:

Normally there are no big changes in food [in my home village]. They just consume what they plant. Every family feeds and consumes a pig every year and puts the meat in oil to preserve it for the whole year. Now local people's cooking skills have improved. They cook several dishes when they have guests. Some grassland areas have become protected, and local folks cannot herd their animals. So many families now use trailers/hand tractors for farm work since they cannot keep livestock. So, this affects people's diets, and farmers still do not have enough money to buy meat from a market. The only option is to buy it at a farmer's market. (Interview, December 2007)

It seems that change in diet among the *rong ba* depends on wealth rather than on geographic locations. Without a doubt, Tibetan cooking has become influenced by Chinese and Muslim cuisine and is gradually diversifying. Tibetans not only enjoy having other ethnic groups' foods in a restaurant, but they also adopt their cooking skills

and ideas. For example, today Tibetans cook several vegetable dishes to serve their guests rather than just boiling big pieces of meat. While in nomadic areas where yak meat and mutton are served as staples, vegetables and fruit are becoming more and more popular. At the market in Amdo, one can find more people selling vegetables and fruits than yak meat and mutton. Now many nomads can buy fresh vegetables in local markets and enrich their lunch or dinner with vegetables even though they do not know the names of the vegetables. Farmers have changed from the traditional way of simply planting barley or wheat to cultivating market-valued vegetables. Even in the cold winter, people can still have fresh vegetables. In this way, the red meat eaters are becoming white eaters.

While Tibetans have developed special and unique ways to make tea, this tradition is also changing. Now both herders and farmers have started to consume Chinese green tea or red tea (traditionally Tibetans only drink brick tea). They no longer make traditional liquor (or *chang*); they just simply buy it from the shops.

Another big change in agricultural areas is that barley flour has been replaced by wheat flour to make bread. Today *rong bas* consume little or no barley bread, although barley bread is popular in the cities because doctors believe that barley is the only suitable food for those people with diabetes. As Byams-pa observed:

We [farmers] do not eat barley flour bread today, and we also gave up our traditional soup, which is a mixture of bean, barley, and wheat flour. Recently all families have had vegetables during lunch and dinner. (Interview, December 2007)

A Tibetan farmer, Snying-lcags, pointed out, “So tea is changing, liquor is changing, food is changing, and everything is changing!” (Interview, September, 2009). While this is certainly true, there are some traditions that remain strong. For example, in a small village in Bayan or Hualong County, people still cook noodles with *dar ra* (sour milk). Professor Byams-pa mentioned, “Ninety-seven to ninety-eight percent of *rong bas*, still have bread and tea for breakfast in agricultural areas. They cook some vegetables for lunch and noodles for dinner in the traditional ways” (Interview, December 2007). Eriksen (2001) mentions, “Social institutions may be a highly relevant focus for the study of change as well as continuity” (p. 64).

It seems that the gastronomic journey has been a one-way trip toward Chinese food in Tibetan communities. Chinese restaurants and prepared foods are now common in Tibet, and many Tibetans now use these regularly. Young Tibetans avail themselves of instant noodles, teas, rice, cookies, soft drinks, and beer. Many monks even drink Pepsi after they have boiled it. People are lured by taste and convenience, but not by culture, when it comes to food. More Chinese or Hui (one ethnic group of Chinese Muslims) shops and restaurants have been built in Tibetan towns since the late 1980s because few Tibetans have been able to start their own small businesses. Tibetans now eat noodles and other dishes in the Muslim restaurants began to populate the small Tibetan towns in the 1980s. Tibetans have interacted with other ethnic groups for centuries and have started to

reevaluate their way of life. Nomads can make money with their butter. Farmers have young children and grandchildren who attend school and who will be able to obtain government jobs. Both nomads and farmers have started to improve their living standards and increase their income through various nontraditional activities.

2.4 From Red Eaters to White Eaters

While everyone requires food for physical survival and for spiritual reasons, they also seek foods that are enjoyable and flavorful. More people around the world are becoming concerned about the nutritional value of their meals. Tibetans do not have any scientific means of analyzing the nutritional value of their food, but they will tell you that your teeth will be healthier if you eat more cheese. They also believe that butter and meat provide energy for one's body. However, Tibetans in Amdo consume two categories of foods: food with meat, or red diets (Tibetan: *dmar zas*) and vegetarian foods, or white diets (Tibetan: *dkar zas*).

Amdo Tibetans love to eat food with meat and they call it *dmar zas* or red foods. *Dmar zas* is used to describe any food that is meat or contains meat. Other foods without meat are considered as *dkar zas*, or white diets. These other foods are mainly milk products, including cheese, yogurt, butter, and milk tea. It also includes any kind of grain foods such as *rstam pa* (or tsampa). Thus, white diets include bread of barley or wheat flour, rice, and noodles without meat, all of which are white in color. Recently Tibetans began to add vegetables to their meals, which are also considered white foods. Obviously, raw meat and blood is red, so the meaning of red foods is clear. Amdo nomads only ate potatoes, onions, and garlic until just a few decades ago. They were proud that they were not grass eaters like their yaks. Why has this shift occurred in Amdo?

Traditionally, red foods, including yak meat and mutton, have dominated nomadic cuisines, and people consume meat in different ways. They usually boil big pieces of meat with bone and consume them when they are about 70 percent cooked. They also consume meat soup, which always contains meat, but which may or may not contain blood. Dried meat is a good way to keep meat for a long time, and it is also easy to carry. Tibetans usually dry the meat by cutting it into small pieces and then hanging it on a rope outside. In the winter, the meat is kept in a structure constructed of yak dung. Tibetans also consume blood sausage, which is prepared in many ways. The easiest way to consume meat is raw meat, but people only consume raw meat as frozen meat during the winter or as half-dried meat during the spring. Tibetan nomads traditionally do not consume pork, but pork is the staple meat for peasants because they do not have the space required to maintain yak herds. Some nomads and peasants also consume goat meat, though nomads complain about the odd smell of goat meat. Tibetans think that dog meat, horsemeat, donkey meat, and cat meat are all inedible. As Tshe-brtan-rgyal (2010) pointed out that:

Tibetans rarely hunt wild animals and eat their meat because Tibetans often mainly consume meat of yak, sheep, goat, and pig. They have never consumed meat of ass, horse, donkey, mule, etc. (Animals with cloven hooves). Tibetans also do not eat meat of birds with wings and animals that have claws. (p.1)

Older generations of Tibetans do not eat fish, but many younger generations of Tibetans do.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Chinese government distributed limited amounts of grains, including flour, wheat, barley, and rice to nomads and peasants in order to meet local needs. This factor certainly affected the daily food intake of all Tibetans, and nomads in particular. However, the current general trend of food consumption among Tibetans is that they are consuming less meat and more vegetables because vegetables have become increasingly available at affordable prices. Nomads primarily consume meat throughout the year, but they have recently added more vegetables to their diet. They are proud of their evolutionary stance since red eaters became white eaters. In their own joking words, “We can eat grass; we made great progress.”

3.0 Clothing: *Bod lwa* vs. *Rgya lwa*

The fedora has replaced the traditional felt hat; *Si tshar* [faux fur] robes have replaced sheepskin robes; Chinese shoes have replaced Tibetan shoes; and Chinese clothes have replaced Tibetan clothes.

Tshul-blo, et al. (1996)

The traditional Tibetan robe is another obvious symbol of Tibetan culture in Amdo. Tibetans have worn their robes for many centuries, but they have also discovered western clothing in the 20th century. Sheepskin or lambskin are the most commonly used fabrics for Tibetan traditional clothing. Wool is also used in clothing and in making wool carpet or wool felt. Tshe-brtan-rgyal (2010) observed, “Tibetans wear wool and felt clothing in the summer and sheep skin cloth [or Tibetan robe] (Tibetan: *slog pa*) in the winter” (pp. 8-9). Three kinds of sheepskins are used to make cloth because people get different types of sheepskin from the three seasons: summer, autumn, and winter.

In the summer, the sheep have a thick skin with short wool, and the skin is good for making summer clothes. In autumn, sheep have a thin skin with medium-length wool, and the skin is superior for making clothes for all seasons. In winter, sheep have a thin skin with long wool, and the skin is excellent for making winter clothes. To make the cloth, Tibetans soak the sheepskin or lambskin with sour yogurt or wet earth for a day or longer. Then they use their feet to tan or rub (Tibetan: *mnye*) the skin and slowly soften it. A worker needs to work the sheepskin for a few hours to make it soft. For several more hours, he brushes the sheepskin using a long saw-toothed bamboo comb (Tibetan: *pags shad*). A male or female worker then cuts the skin into pieces to form a *slog pa* or Tibetan robe. In general, the local people need seven to ten sheepskins to make one *slog pa*. Some Tibetans prefer to make gown-style clothing (Tibetan: *thog rgyag* or *ras lwa*), using

nylon or other fabric, and it can be worn alone or as a gown of sheepskin. *Thog rgyag* literally means “cover” and *Ras lwa* literally means “textile clothing”.

Tibetans wear *slog pa* with or without the *ras lwa* in winter and the *ras lwa* is worn alone in summer. *Tsha ru*, lambskin clothing, can be worn in winter and summer with *ras lwa* or a fixed fabric cover. The shape or model of the robe is similar throughout Amdo, but the decorative details vary from place to place. Men and women have differently designed robes, and Tibetans call a male robe a *pho slog*, and a female robe a *mo slog*. Both men and women can be a tailor, or *bzo pa*. Usually a family produces its own robes, but sometimes neighbors help to make a robe. In the winter, people will also wear a fox skin hat for warmth and a felt hat in the summer.

In nomadic areas, men usually have one or two color fabric decorative edgings or bands on the cuff of the sleeves, collars and end of outside flap of their robes, whereas a woman tends to have at least two and usually three decorative edgings or borders. The main decoration of the male robe is a long and narrow tiger skin or leopard skin on the collar and narrow black fabric on the hem of the robe. Women may use red and black narrow fabric to decorate the edge of their robes. They usually buy these decorative fabrics at the market. Not only can one see the difference between male and female clothing from the design and shape of a robe, but the men and women also wear their robes in different ways. For example, the lower edge of a man’s robe must reach his knees when he wears it, and a woman’s robe must reach the top of her feet. The robes are also used as blankets when people sleep.

Peasants also wear robes similar to those worn by nomads, but *tsha ru* and *ras lwa* are more popular because of the climate (The weather in agriculture areas is warmer weather than in nomadic areas). Black is the most popular color of *ras lwa*, although green is also used.

In recent years, both nomads and peasants have started to wear modern clothing, or *rgya lwa* (it means Han Chinese clothing but refers to any kind of universal/western style clothing) made with various fabrics for different seasons. We can categorize the clothing into two types: traditional clothing with new materials and universal/western style clothing. Many nomadic men and women are delighted to wear traditional style clothing made from new materials. Faux fur robe (Tibetan: *si tshar*) is a good example for this trend. It is a kind of robe made with faux fur woven together and Tibetans mistakenly assume this faux fur is silk and call it a silk robe. People can buy a piece of this faux fur to make robes, or they can buy finished faux fur robes in a town market. Significant numbers of nomadic men are also modifying their clothing to modern styles. It is common that young and middle aged males wear universal style clothing on the grassland. They are not willing to make and wear traditional hats and clothing. They prefer the more convenient ways to clothe their bodies. Often they wear all modern clothing during summer and wear traditional clothing when the weather is cold. Some elderly nomadic men love to wear the Chinese military winter coats.

A Chinese speaker Tibetan professor, Byams-pa, said:

Traditional clothing materials are changing. Men wore clothing made with goat wool when I was a little boy. People used another material of Tibetan green nylon that I think came from India. This kind of green cloth still exists, but the majority of people do not wear it now. People wore green nylon cloth until the 1960s and 1970s. So, materials are changing. Another thing is that it is hard to find many traditional materials, and some of them are prohibited. People from Hehuang region [Tsongkha] have kept one type of traditional clothing for their entire lives. They often wear modern clothes. They only wear traditional clothes for weddings or celebrations. Recently they have stopped to wear sheepskin cloth, which was a marked symbol of traditional clothes. The traditional clothes are still the same; there is not much change. There is no way to change the model or shape since the traditional clothes can only be made that way. But the sashes (*ske/ska rags*) are changing, too. A small change in traditional clothing is that before we used simple fabric to make cloth, and the clothes were low quality. Now they are made with colorful fabrics and some are made with silk because the price is cheaper now. Tibetans from Tsongkha have also changed their hats or caps. For instance, before men wore *phying zhwa* (a felt hat made with sheep wool) or felt hats and now they wear fedoras and baseball caps. After the Liberation, felt hats disappeared and people began to wear fedora. A Chinese manufacturer in Tianjing has specifically produced fedora for Tibetans. (Interview, December 2007)

Some younger nomadic girls prefer to wear western style skirts during the summer. But, nomadic women do not seem to want to give up the basic styles of traditional clothing even though they may choose to use modern materials. Many people often wonder why women are more conservative than men regarding clothing. Many of my research participants believe that traditionally a woman should have a sense of shame about whatever she does or says, and this culture affects her clothing because a woman should not expose her body as a man does. Tibetans traditionally used the term “naked” to refer to a person who takes off his or her Tibetan robe. This language habit is a strong signal for Tibetan women to keep their robes. Another possible reason is that women often work at home and are influenced less by the outside world.

Many *rong ba* (villagers), in particular males, have abandoned traditional clothing and wear *rgya lwa* because they live close to towns, and the weather allows them to have fabric clothing. As Ye-shes-chos-‘phel, a peasant from Rdobis Township mentioned:

In our village, men under 60 years old do not wear the traditional clothing and prefer the modern styles. Women over 40 still wear traditional robes, and young women say that it is more convenient for them to work if they wear *rgya lwa*. No doubt, there is a rising trend of wearing modern clothing. (Interview, September 2010)

Both nomads and peasants wear traditional Tibetan clothing for weddings or special occasions. They think weddings are very significant for a person and his or her family and group, so it is important to wear traditional clothing during such a special occasion. It is also a way to remember their traditional culture. It is also important to mention that many Tibetans wear traditional clothing when they come to monasteries or religious centers. Some lamas urge Tibetans to keep their traditional clothing and request that Tibetans wear traditional clothing if they wish to participate in religious activities at the

monasteries. Religion often represents tradition, and religious officials often attempt to keep traditional rules and norms present in people's minds and behaviors. The choice of clothing style may show one's attitude toward tradition and modernity. Modernity is gaining power, and religion resists the diversified solutions of modernity.

However, there are many reasons for the shift of clothing from traditional styles and materials to universal styles and new materials. The first reason is the function of ideology allowing locals to change their minds gradually rather than rapidly when they encounter new things. For example, local people are not willing to give up their robes without maintaining some element of tradition. Thus, they accept clothing with old styles and new materials because they still wear robes, and the new materials have more benefits. One herder, 'Brug-lha, stated:

A faux fur robe is good since it is not like sheepskin robe, which doesn't do well when it absorbs water. We can wear it in rain or snow. Even when we wash it, it lightens our work. You do not need to spend many hours to work the sheepskin. You just sell your sheepskin in the market and buy faux fur clothing. Faux fur clothing is not so heavy. There are advantages of the new materials for clothing. But, I worry that we are losing our clothing culture. Young people are becoming lazy, and our tradition of making sheepskin robes may die away. (Interview, September 2007)

Similarly, another male Tibetan herder, Bkra-shis, from Mgolog, pointed out:

People like to try to new things and pursue a comfortable life. Basically, people find it easier to accept new materials rather than a new shape or form. For instance, Tibetans are now using faux furs to make Tibetan-style clothing, and then many gradually change their clothing styles to a new form or model. (Interview, September 2009)

This demonstrates how some aspects of cultural change occur in a society. The changes occur gradually and locally at first. As the changes progress, they affect other aspects of the people's livelihoods.

The second reason for wearing universal style clothing is practical. Many young and old Tibetans agree that the new style clothing is suitable for everyone who goes out in search of jobs in towns or cities. A peasant, Dkon-mchog-cho-'phel, from Rdobis Township stated:

In my village, women under 40 began to wear *rgya lwa* when they work in the farm field and gradually at home. They say *rgya lwa* is convenient for work. Of course, it is needless to say that young villagers who work in towns and cities have to wear *rgya lwa*, otherwise, it is not convenient. (Interview, October 2010)

China's emergence as the producer of world clothing has brought different styles of clothing and new materials to Tibetans' lives. In towns, one can see shops selling faux fur and/or completed Tibetan robes with this new material. Modern clothing dominates the shops in remote towns. Jiayangjia (2009), a native Tibetan from Rmachu County, noticed the changes of clothing culture in Rmachu County, and he wrote:

Recently in Maqu [Rmachu] County clothing sales have increased; the average income of most clothing shops is 2000 to 3000 RMB for per month. The most popular clothing are outdoor clothing brands such as the North Face and Zuodannu (佐丹奴). (p. 379)

People may go for the alternative clothing items if they have choices, but if they do not have option, they may have to be satisfied with what they already have.

As a peasant, Dam-chos, from Sgargsar Village of Kluchu County observed:

During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, we were required to wear *rgya lwa*, none of us had *rgya lwa*, so, how could we shift our clothing? But today no one pushes us to change our clothing, everyone prefers to wears *rgya lwa* except older people. I think there are so many choices for clothing.” (Interview, September 2009)

Makley (2007) also mentioned that the same requirement reached the Sangkok [bsangkhog] grassland in 1958, “[a]t that time [1958] state cadres especially, insisted Apa Dondrub [Tib: Don-grub], were pressured to leave behind Tibetan clothes for modern uniforms” (p.113).

The varied fabrics and local style clothes are available in market push many Tibetans to give up their homemade clothes. Modern footwear became popular in Tibet early on, and only some monks still wear traditional shoes today even though these traditional shoes are made in China. Clothing trends are often led by the fashion industry. Obviously, they advertise and market the items they want consumers to buy. Probably it is true that Tibetan nomads are more open to new things and they accept them quickly. As Jiayangjia (2009) pointed out:

Because of commercial advertising, nomads unconsciously accept famous brands of clothing, and they believe that the brand will bring them certain honors. [...] Nomads think that The North Face is a “universal [brand],” but Tibetan clothing such as the robe is “local.” They assume that robes are just heavy and dirty. Overall, they [Tibetans] just simply give up [their traditional clothes]. (pp. 370-380)

Recently, local people also have interacted with others frequently. In particular, young people are more active in contacting other groups, and they enjoy buying fashionable clothing if they have enough money. As one Tibetan farmer from Mtsholho, Klu-rgyal, mentioned:

In the late 1970s and 1980s, almost all farmers in my place wore traditional Tibetan clothing, although we had to wear *rgya lwa*, modern clothes during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. But now, the situation is different. Everyone in my village wears *rgya lwa* and it is convenient when you work in the field or do other jobs. I think women were shy to wear *rgya lwa* during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Now they also prefer to have *rgya lwa* rather than Tibetan clothes. Women who are over 50 years old still favor Tibetan clothes. I think that young people aged around 20 years old started to wear *rgya lwa* in the 1990s, and people have slowly obtained money and decided to buy clothes in the market. We can get many beautiful clothes today. (Interview, December 2008)

The farmer's statement demonstrates that young people easily accept new things if they have the financial resources with which to buy them. In this case, Tibetan students may have a similar character, and their financial backgrounds may determine their clothing and hairstyles. Even in the remote villages, Tibetan students can now buy fashionable clothing in a local store and dye their hair.

The word "fashion" is not only important to clothing, but it has also affected the way Tibetan peasants and nomads build their shelters.

4.0 Shelters

4.1 Black Tents and Wood Houses vs. Brick and Cement Houses

Nomads traditionally live in black tents since they need to move from place to place in order to find grass and water for their animals. The black tent has been a unique Tibetan nomadic shelter for many centuries. Many Tibetans believe that black tent is as an important symbol of Tibetan culture as *tsampa* is. Yaks produce wool for the tent, and Tibetan women are skilled in weaving it into 1 *che* 尺 (one third of a meter) wide coarse knit or strip with any kind of length. A skilled woman can weave 1 1/2 meters strip of cloth per day, and it is usually woven in the summer because it is outdoor work, and the cold weather does not allow outdoor work in most Tibetan areas. Often a single woman can weave the cloth, but collective work efforts needed when women sew the strips of yak hair cloth in order to make a tent for one family.

There are two kinds of black tents: *sbra* and *nag tshang*. The difference between two types of tent is that *nag tshang* is sewed horizontal strips of cloth together from the top of the tent to the bottom while *sbra* is sewed vertical strips of cloth together from the right to the left. A big tent may need 20 strips of cloth, and a small one may need 7 to 8 strips of cloth. As Xing Haining 邢海宁 (1994) pointed out in Golok, "most families live in '*sbra*'" (p. 197). A tent needs one wooden ridge pole, two sectional poles and four supporting sticks inside to support it along with other wooden poles to stand up outside ropes which are tied with small wooden stakes inserted into the ground. It may require a few long and short wooden pegs from other places, but the family produces the other materials.

Tibetan peasants are settled in deep valleys and usually live in houses they have built. In Amdo, many traditional houses are constructed of earth and wood. A house usually has a space of six square meters for the yard surrounded on four sides by a high wall, and normally the house leans on three sides, entire north, partial east, entire or partial west, of the wall. A house often faces south and has a big gate on the south wall. The basic structure is one yard for one house. There are usually seven rooms in a house, but the number of rooms depends on the size of the yard. They use plank wooden beams and wooden planks covered with earth or clay. The roof is flat, thus allowing grain to be

spread for drying on the rooftop. ‘Brug-mo-skyid et al. (2010) mentioned that in Stagrig Village, “Most villagers lived in flat-roofed rooms made of adobe bricks and wood” (p.169). Present-day villagers have built their houses with bricks (redbrick or cement-brick) and wood (Chinese environmental laws ban the cutting of wood, so wood has become scarce and expensive. Many Tibetans now use metal to make doors/gates and window frames).

The flat-roofed houses are common in the agricultural areas of Amdo, and this style house has a big kitchen and it plays several roles, including serving as a dining room, guestroom, and heating room. Not all Tibetan villagers live in the same style house. As Xing Haining 邢海宁 (1994) explained, “The Tibetan stone house of agricultural areas in Banma [Padma] County is called a castle (Tibetan: ‘*kua ri*’ [*mkhar*]). This kind of Tibetan stone house is totally built by stones and it could be two or three floors. The shape of building is rectangular” (p. 195). Today one can find variations of house styles in Amdo, but traditionally Tibetan peasant houses are constructed with earth/adobe and wood.

4.2 The New Trend of Shelters in Amdo

There has been a dramatic change in the materials Tibetans use for shelter and in the different types of shelter. This has been true for both nomadic and peasant populations. Decollectivization in the Amdo region started in the 1980s, and during this time each household was given a lot of farmland or grassland. Many nomads have already settled permanently or semi-permanently because they have received their own grassland as the result of the land contract. The local governments encouraged and subsidized local nomads to fence in their family grassland. As a result, nomads do not need to, and are generally not able to migrate across the larger region. The local herders graze their animals within a smaller area according to the seasons. Nomads complain about the limited areas for migration. They think their yaks have become smaller physically now that they have less space on which their animals can graze. At the same time, not having to migrate has given the nomads more leisure time. Some people have started to learn mahjong and other leisure activities. There is no way to get rich without skills in towns, and some have already become poor because even with their new-relaxed lifestyle it is still a matter of the Darwinian theory of survival of the fittest.

Many nomads built houses in their winter pasture and the styles of their houses vary from region to region because the style chosen depends on who is building them. As Tshul-blo et al. (1996) stated, “[Herders of Mgarrrtse Tribe live in] black tents and fabric tents in summer pasture and most of [them live] in houses in winter pasture” (p.335). In general, Chinese builders from Gansu Province construct the nomads’ houses, and they often use redbrick/cement-brick and cement. Doors are made of wood, and window frames are made of metal or wood. The Chinese builders are usually skilled workers who

have experience building and are independent contractors, meaning that they work for no company in particular. These laborers are often not familiar with how Tibetans have traditionally built their homes, and they build the houses in the styles with which they are familiar. Local people simply accept the cheap constructions and do not care about the styles of the houses. Some Amdo farmers have also started to hire Chinese workers to build their houses, and many Tibetans are upset about this happening and say that they feel to enter a Linxia (临夏) village when they enter some Tibetan villages because the Chinese from Linxia built their houses. Many Tibetan towns in Amdo are full of Linxia style houses.

Government aid agencies, in particular, the Civil Affairs Bureau of the county, have built houses with Tibetan features for some poor nomadic families. The biggest change for nomadic people's life has been the government's nomadic settlement projects, which force nomads to give up traditional nomadic life and settle down in communities near towns. Settlement houses are designed in Tibetan styles, and they are usually built by Chinese construction companies. However, the quality of the settlement houses has been called into question because of widespread corruption. The local people are hesitant to move into the settlement houses because they are attached to their nomadic lives on the grasslands and because they know the settlement houses are of poor quality. However, some Chinese elites and the government officials argue that it is necessary to control overgrazing in order to protect the fragile ecosystem of the Tibetan plateau (Qing-Zang high plateau, Chinese: 青藏高原; pinyin: Qingzang gaoyuan). In fact, nomad settlement projects have become a way of attaining political achievement and getting rich for many local officials.

If they have enough funding, the *rong bas* also build their houses with redbrick and cement. Traditional village houses have wooden frame windows. The windowpanes are actually very thin paper that keeps the outside air from getting inside. This helps to keep the house warm, but it also blocks out sunlight, which can also provide warmth. The insides of these buildings are usually very dark.

The Chinese government has cracked down on deforestation and has banned people from using trees from neighboring forests for housing construction. As a result, farmers have had to use whatever materials they can access cheaply and easily. Farmers have also begun to construct more modern housing. Modern influences have led them to believe that if they build modern one or two storey houses of redbrick, it demonstrates a certain level of success. 'Brug-mo-skyid et al (2010) pointed out that "Certain financially well-off villagers lived in red-brick houses with glass windows" (p.169).

Young generations disapprove of traditional style houses and feel they are left behind in the march to modernization if they live in traditional style houses. Some people even believe that traditional style houses show other people that the people who live in them are backwards. Many people are eager to accept new things and are ready to give up tradition. I tried to find a traditional Tibetan house in Amdo, but people told me that it is

hard to find a house that was built before the 1950s today because every family had rebuilt their house using new designs and new materials. Dkon-mchog-chos-'phel from Rdobis Township confirmed that the oldest house in his village was torn down a month before I reached their village in 2010 (In 2010, this family built a new house and destroyed their old one). He also mentioned that, "Some people said it would be good to keep their old houses for some reasons, but others think the old houses are a symbol of backwardness" (Interview, October 2010).

Modern housing construction is evidence of a shift among the general population to an interest in material things rather than spiritual matters. Many *rong bas* now seek work in neighboring towns and cities in order to increase their incomes.

One popular form of supplemental work, which is done by peasant men, women, and children alike, is to collect caterpillar fungus¹⁷ from the mountainsides. The fungus can be sold at high value in eastern China and is a huge income for many families in the area. People have started to accumulate properties and have developed a competitive mentality. Mkhhar-'bum argued:

During collectivization, we needed to work at earning scores to get a little money and enough food from the government. Now the situation depends on oneself and the market. People like to compete with each other, and there is a lot of competition in one's life. Farmers in my hometown have started to build huge and beautiful houses, and every family now has to own a motorbike. Otherwise, people may look down on you. (Interview, September 2008)

Like other ethnic minorities, the proliferation of new technology in China has made Tibetans more interested in acquiring televisions, radios, tape recorders, mobile phones, motorbikes, and cars.

5.0 Impact of New Technology and Development

The progress of new technology has challenged Tibetans' lives and goals. Radio and television has had a dramatic influence on Tibetans. They are now able to learn about and discuss domestic and world news. One of my friends, a famous Tibetan writer, told me that nomads listen to different radio programs in the Tibetan language every day, and they often know more than he does. I have also listened to Tibetan farmers discussing the war in Iraq.

This (one-way) flow of information not only affects the manner of Tibetan life but also their way of thinking. Among many nomadic Tibetans, their televisions, radios, and DVD players have replaced their herds as their most valuable belongings. Homes have replaced yaks as the traditional form of wealth. The mobile phone has recently provided another tool for communication. It has become a symbol of development and

¹⁷ It's *Ophiocordyceps sinensis* and it is better known throughout Asia by the Tibetan term, *dbyar rtσα dgun* 'bu (phonetic: yartsa gunbu), which means "summer grass, winter worm."

advancement. One of my interviewees, Lhun-'grub, from Mdoba Township in Rebgong, told a story which demonstrates this symbolism among Tibetan nomads:

In my hometown, local people are borrowing an old Chinese idea that says that their society is backward and they should worship high technology and modernization. Now people buy cell phones even if they do not have a cell phone connection or network in their region. A new nomad bride will hang a cell phone on her neck instead of traditional coral necklace to show her wealth, even though the cell phone is useless. (Interview, September 2009)

The motorcycle and automobile are examples of how high technology is influencing Tibetan life. Tibetans love motorcycles and cars as much as they loved horses just a few decades ago. Now they can purchase motorcycles and cars in their local towns. People want to own motorbikes and cars because they have become symbol of wealth and prestige. Tibetans have also suddenly realized that their lives are now more reliant on other people and on the market than before. They do not have a clear idea about how the changes in consumption patterns lead them into this increasing uncertainty and reliance. They have gradually lost their traditional means of production and have become more focused on making money in different ways. Many nomads move to towns to seek better lives but find the reality is quite different. In the towns, they do not have any of the necessary skills to earn money and instead they pick up bad habits such as gambling and theft. Some wealthy people began lending money to the poor at high interest rates, which has made the poor people's lives even more difficult. Many nomads suffer from debt and from high loan payments. Yet, they still do not want to return to the grassland and herd livestock. The nomads say that life on the grassland is hard and uncomfortable. Instead, they just waste their time by hanging around towns and accumulating more debt. Some of them open shops and restaurants in local towns, but there is a high risk, and the market economy does little to help them. The nomads' lack of the necessary skills and knowledge often prevents them from achieving success outside of their traditional subsistence livelihoods.

The lifestyle of nomadic Tibetans has gradually been catching up with that of town residents, who have houses and modern tools. The nomads do not have the job skills they need to earn a living in today's modern economy, so they spend much of their time idle. For this reason many nomads spent their money to speed the growth in towns and a few became wealthier quickly, and the number of poor families has also increased quickly. The nomads who are still able to keep their grasslands may have their houses and may even have buildings for their livestock.

Han Chinese scholars assume that it is a big step forward in modernization when nomads give up their traditional nomadic life and settle down in towns or in their winter pastures. However, because all humans desire comfort and an easy life, Tibetan nomads are purchasing and using new technologies to help them catch the fast train of globalization. Globalization may bring the nomads risks and push them to weaken their culture and traditions. We can understand that an elderly Tibetan old man would say he

gained another eye when he put a solar energy panel on the roof of his tent to enjoy the light at night and his tape recorder with *Rdung len* (or Tibetan guitar music) during the day. A Tibetan may become jealous of a neighbor's new car or motorcycle. Our desires never let our minds rest, and we sometimes do not know when enough is enough. Tibetan nomads argue that they change their food, clothing, and shelter choices because of convenience and comfort, but many western scholars who live in luxury buildings feel it is a pity when they hear of the declining numbers of Tibetan nomads.

Herders themselves are infatuated with the sustainable life of the grassland, but they also appreciate the colorful life in towns. Many nomads have begun to worry about the quality of their houses and delayed government supplementary funds for the houses. Already settled nomads have felt it hard to handle life in towns or settlement communities because they even cannot afford to buy fuel. The traditional fuel for nomad is yak (Tibetan: *lci ba*) or sheep (Tibetan: *ril ma*) dung. These fuels are free if a family has livestock to produce them, but it can be costly when these items need to be purchased.

In towns, people burn coal to cook foods and heat rooms if their financial situation allows them to buy the fuel. Others have to buy yak or sheep dung from dealers or request their relatives to donate them.

Many nomads do not feel their houses are warmer than traditional tents if they do not have enough fuel to burn. Many of them have felt that their traditional way of life is more practical than the modern life if they are not wealthy enough to purchase every modern convenience.

It is true that there is conflict between tradition and modernity when we examine life as a whole. As Eriksen (2001) observed, "It must be stressed, however, that in fact virtually no local community is completely self-sustaining and unchanging through time" (p. 58). The fast development of infrastructure is a main reason for the emergence of new housing trends in Amdo. Roads and communication are key influences that have supported the movement of, people and materials between towns and rural villages. Not only have the villagers and nomads built new roads to their homes, but they have also become interested in modern transportation, including cars and motorcycles. Improvement of transportation, and the availability of new materials for building in town markets, accelerates the change in housing trends in Amdo. The government has built new roads in rural areas to boost economic growth and hasten development of these areas. Warr (2006) mentioned, "It is widely recognized that rural roads are a major development problem. It is obvious by just inspecting these roads, that improving them will generate benefits" (p. 19).

Transportation has also shifted from horses and yaks to cars and motorbikes. This change has shortened travel time and has allowed people and goods to be moved from place to place quickly. Businessmen have found it easier to transport themselves and their goods with the emergence of motor vehicles and technology.

Amdo peasants are not familiar with new building materials and so they hire Chinese workers to build their houses. This contradicts past practices of building their own homes with the help of neighbors and other community members. Tibetans have transitioned from their own collectivist economy, which the Chinese government has criticized as feudal, to the state planned economy, and finally to a modern capitalist economy or market-oriented economy. Today, everyone thinks and talks about money because the power of the market economy has brought big changes to the lives of Tibetans. Nomads claim that they do not have warm and comfortable housing during the harsh winters on the high plateau. Peasants are not satisfied with their new redbrick houses because their eyes are attracted to the town buildings with their modern facilities and heat.

Government policy has had a substantial impact on Tibetan livelihoods and culture even in this new era of openness. The market economy and the increasing importance of money have strongly influenced the Tibetan lifestyle. New road construction has given people more opportunities to interact.

People living close to the cities and near to transportation lines appear to be changing faster than people who live farther away. It is also true that farmers prefer to choose vegetables since they can afford the price, and they may plant vegetables on their own farms. As one Tibetan farmer, Snying-clag, noted:

Farmers living in nearby towns make money with their vegetables, and they also consume them a lot. My village cannot plant many vegetables, but we buy vegetables in a market and cook them since they are cheaper than meat. (Interview, December 2008)

This insight shows us that people try to save money and fill their stomachs with the cheapest foods available. They may also need their money to buy clothes and fill the tanks of their motorbikes because it is still true that many farmers do not have a reliable income. Some nomads even argue that their meals are more delicious if they cook vegetables and meat together. They also admit the price of vegetables is much cheaper than that of meat and that it is wise to consume more vegetables. Therefore, it is not possible to separate the changes in food, clothing, and shelter from the larger social realities.

The social, economic, and political changes have also had a serious impact on the natural environment or ecosystem of the Tibetan plateau. Globalization affects everyone, because in the modern globalized economy, money can buy everything. Griswold (1994) described, “the ‘cash nexus’ of capitalism, whereby everyone and everything seemed to be evaluated on an economic basis” (p. 4). People now interpret satisfaction, and the fulfillment of the basic material needs of food, clothing, and shelter in different ways. Tibetans have relied on agriculture and animal husbandry to meet their subsistence needs for many years, but this is now changing.

Without a doubt, the living conditions in Amdo have greatly improved, and Amdobas’ desire to gain more wealth with less effort has also grown fast. People are now

more concerned with satisfying their own desires, and they have become individualistic. With the increase in tourism both into and out of Tibet, local Tibetans have learned many new ideas through regular interaction with other ethnic groups and cultures.

6.0 Summary

It now seems that the Tibetans from nomadic and agricultural areas tend to accept modern materials and practices in their lives. It is not an exaggeration to say that one's social system and environment influence one's lifestyle. Tibetan students today who have nomadic or agricultural backgrounds may not have vastly different characteristics after all. Students want modern clothing and hairstyles if they have the money to afford them. Nomads and farmers have added new elements to their traditional food, clothing, and shelter. No one can predict whether their older traditions will gradually vanish or continue to survive. Rapid economic development in Tibetan areas is increasingly affecting local people's livelihoods. Many nomads have built houses in their winter pastures and have put up fences around their grasslands. Government officials have constructed various types of nomadic settlements for different reasons, but those settlement projects have been poorly designed. Many families have to move into towns, where their lives are not necessarily better, but they have the additional burdens of modernity and capitalism.

Those nomads who still try to keep a traditional way of life do not have enough space for their domestic animals to graze freely in the vast grasslands, and the grasslands do not have as much available grass as they once did. Although nomadic families say that the scope of their grassland is just like a person's palm (it means very small), they still have to herd animals in winter and summer pastures separately. Tibetans in agricultural areas have the advantage of being able to seek work in towns because their own crops are no longer dependable. Their lands increasingly require chemical fertilizer, which pushes peasants to spend more money than they earn. Many families may have better houses and consume better foods if they have skills to participate in the market economy. Traditional methods of earning income are more reliable for unskilled Tibetans.

Historically, nomadic and farmer traditions regarding food, clothing, and shelter were stable. The recent experiences and livelihood alterations among various Tibetan nomadic and agricultural groups in Amdo show that Tibetan traditions are facing a challenge. While it is hard to generalize about the emerging trends of Tibetan livelihoods in Amdo, the change itself is clear. Many farmers, both men and women, have given up their traditional clothes, and they wear *rgya lwa*, or modern clothing for convenience so they can work anywhere and blend in with the larger community. Men prefer to wear *rgya lwa* in nomadic areas, but women still keep the traditional clothing, with the exception of some girls wearing skirts in the summertime. Both nomads and farmers acknowledge that traditional clothing is a symbol of their identity, and they often dress in

traditional clothing during religious ceremonies and on special occasions such as wedding ceremonies and New Year celebrations. People may not want to separate from their traditions, but they cannot keep their tradition when another option does not exist.

New York City is the biggest melting pot in the world. It is impossible to count the number of nationalities represented, but some sources say that public school students in New York City speak more than 200 different languages. When I lived there, I observed that many groups of people wore their traditional clothing on their home nations' special holidays. Indeed, many people in New York City wore traditional clothing every day. I often saw Indian women wearing saris when I rode the subway, for example. New York's Hasidic Jews also wear traditional clothing all the time. I think New York City is unique in this way, however, and most people, everywhere, attempt to blend in to whatever clothing styles are dominant in the place where they reside. What makes Tibet interesting in this area is that Chinese are forcing their dominant culture on the indigenous population.

Tibetan farmers build large houses to show their progress and achievement, though many of them do not spend much time at home because they stay in the towns or cities to seek employment or business opportunities. Only a few nomads do business in towns, and the majority of nomads still spend their time with animals. Nomads usually profit from their animal products, though many people think that nomadic life is harsh. Many nomads have also started to live in houses rather than tents. In particular, they can avoid strong winds and heavy snow in winter if they build houses. Today, many nomads are settling down in their winter pastures or towns, and their subsistence economy seems to be better able to adapt to modernization than the peasant economy has.

There is thus a changing trend in Tibetan food, clothing, and shelter traditions in both agricultural and nomadic areas in Amdo. According to this research, there are several factors influencing this trend: Government policy directly or indirectly affects people's lives and customs. New technology and improved infrastructure also alter people's lifestyles, especially younger people's lifestyles. As a major part of globalization, the market economy encourages the flow of goods and the movement of people from one place to another. The frequent interactions with other ethnic groups bring energy for social change. The idea that money is everything and a profit-oriented economy inspires Tibetans just as it does people everywhere. Almost every Tibetan now aspires to maximize his or her income through various activities because the government policies and the market make it possible for them to add new experiences to their lives. All these demonstrate:

[A] theoretical direction reminiscent of diffusionism is returning in the 1990s, under the label of globalization theory, which is an attempt to understand and account for the ways in which modern mass communications, migration, global capitalism and other 'global' phenomena affect local conditions everywhere in the world. (Eriksen, 1995, p.4)

Within Tibetan society, younger generations lead others to accept new things, and their desires are primarily focused on modernization rather than on traditional goals. This is the reason why almost every family has a motorbike, and almost every person has a cell phone. Tibetans believe that these items are symbols of economic success and social advancement. Their progress is presented in hybrids of clothing, food, and housing. It may be a natural process of changing when old styles and new styles combined to give birth to hybrid things before new styles and tastes completely take over the old ones.

PART II: KINSHIP AND ALLIANCE

CHAPTER 3

KINSHIP TERMS IN AMDO

1.0 Introduction

Kinship is a major social phenomenon and is used by anthropologists in their analysis of different societies and cultures. Kinship terms play a key role in understanding family systems and the structure of a society. As Benedict (1942) pointed out, “The Tibetan kinship terminology presents much of interest both to the anthropologist and to the philologist” (p. 131). However, we also need to realize that meanings are stable within certain historical contingencies and cultural contexts. That is, in a certain time and place, fixed meanings can be found among specific groups. Some Tibetan kinship terms are less complicated and have generally understood meanings.

Kinship terms have a long history in any culture, and normally their meanings are passed along with the words themselves through the generations. Arbitrary meanings of kinship terms may offer us a good method for disclosing some cultural codes. Therefore, it is important to trace the kinship terms back to their origins and investigate how they have been modified or have taken on different meanings. The results may show how the living generations can create new meanings for a word and thus change the existing or formalized meanings. Therefore, neither the meanings nor the words are fixed, and users or actors can always change them according to a speaker’s adoption and transference of a word’s new meaning to another person.

I began my research on Tibetan culture in 2007, and I decided to focus on the social and cultural changes occurring in Amdo. I have noticed that studying the Tibetan kinship system is vital to gaining an understanding of Tibetan social relationships and cultural practices. As a result, an investigation of the Tibetan kinship system and terminology in Amdo became an essential part in my research. I have read several articles on Tibetan kinship terminology, and I have found that no writer has specifically focused on the variation in kinship terms among Tibetan groups in the northeastern Tibetan area known as Amdo. This chapter will discuss variations in Tibetan kinship terminology among the Amdobas and how local people use these terms in their daily lives. This portion of my research seeks to understand why local people use specific kinship terms and how these terms relate to the classical Tibetan language.

Through qualitative methodology and a cultural relativist framework, I sought to understand individual or localized categories of kinship terms in Amdo. The research established that kinship terms among Amdobas are gender-based and progress from the general to the specific. The research also discovered that different groups of Amdobas use kinship terms differently, although there are some commonalities.

As argued by Barker, et al. (2001), “Williams understood culture as constituted by the meanings and practices of ordinary men and women” (p. 3). In this chapter, I used a cultural relativist framework because I believe that cultural phenomena are relatively valid within a local context, timeframe, or geographic location. We cannot reach consensus regarding what is universally true at this moment because many social phenomena are unknown to us. The problem this presents in terms of kinship terminology is that one sign or symbol may have different meanings to different groups. A simple example of this difference in interpretation is a cross. Many westerners regard the cross as a very important sign or symbol for religious purposes, whereas in Chinese it is a written character that signifies the number 10. This example shows us how people interpret objects and signs in different ways based on their specific social norms and acculturation. I also applied a constructivist model and intend to explain what the local kinship terms mean and how the local villagers use them. Amdo villagers in the same village may use kinship terms differently even though the words themselves have the same sounds and spellings.

Traditionally, scholars have focused on content analysis and have tried to understand the denotation and connotation of signs and words. Scholars have developed many methods and techniques to assist them in their research activities, and now many of them use what is known as discourse analysis to conduct research projects. The goal of discourse analysis is to understand not only the “what” but also the “how” of terminology and signs and the meanings behind them. Anti-essentialism is another important theory and it is a supportive method that can be used in exploring identities in a society. As Barker (2008) observed:

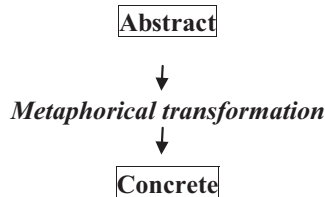
[...] the argument, known as anti-essentialism, is that identities are not things that exist; they have no essential or universal qualities. Rather, they are discursive construction, the product of discourses or regulated ways of speaking about the world. In other words, identities are constituted, made rather than found, by representations, notably language. (p. 11)

Although this research may not rely on discourse analysis, I have also borrowed a useful concept, the analysis of binaries, from structuralism in order to develop my analysis. As Barker (2008) observed, “[S]tructuralism proceeds through the analysis of binaries: for example the contrast between *langue* and *parole* or between pairs of signs so that ‘black’ only has meaning in relation to ‘white’ and vice versa” (p. 16). The data was coded in different levels and analyzed by “the deep structure of Hart to Hart¹⁸,” (Figure 4) which is a summarized model of the binary analysis, of Fiske (Barker, 2008, p. 106). According to this model, kinship terminology starts with the most general binary terms, male and female. The terms then get progressively more specific, with nearly every family member’s relationship to another family member being clearly defined. The Hart to Hart

¹⁸ Hart to Hart gets its name from a U.S. television series from the 1970s and 1980s about a husband and wife team of amateur detectives.

model will assist in the categorization and classification of Amdo Tibetan kinship terms. However, I use this model to code Tibetan kinship terms rather than favoring the decentralizing of human agents from the heart of the inquiry (Barker, 2008, p. 15).

Figure 4: The Deep Structure of Hart to Hart



Kinship terms in Amdo clearly show that boundaries of kinship are based on gender. At an abstract level, the binary is male opposite to the female. Two specific and opposite kinship terms can be categorized in a similar way and interpreted as a concrete binary. For example, mother: father, sister: brother, daughter: son, etc. (Table 1)

In Amdo, kinship is based on the relationship of consanguinity (blood relations), affinity, and adoption. Consanguinity is the basic element of kinship. Amdobas recognize the consanguinity of both the father’s side and the mother’s side.

2.0 Amdo Kinship System

“Although it is a widespread cultural notion in ‘Western’ societies that kinship is related to biology and blood ties (Schneider 1984), anthropological research generally analyses it as cultural classifications of people and as aspects of group formation” (Eriksen, 2001, pp. 93-94).

Generally Amdo Tibetans are bilateral, and both the father and the mother’s sides are relatives of Ego. They practice exogenous patrilineage as a basic social unit, and there exists cross-cousin marriage among groups in agricultural areas as well as in some nomadic areas. This does not suggest that cross-cousin marriage is the main system in Amdo. Amdobas refer to their relatives (from both sides of father and mother) as flesh and blood (*sha khrag*), close and distant (*nye ring*), near-distant and nearby (*nye sa* or *nye bo*), and close flesh (*sha nye*). In some places in Amdo *sha nye* is colloquial, and it means brother. Many other places this term refers to patrilineal and matrilineal relatives. For instance, one may call *sha nye* all the relatives who are from the lineage of one’s father and mother. In Amdo Tibetan society, sexual relations between family members (*sha nye*) is always strictly prohibited.

Rus rgyud (*Rus* means bone/kin, and *rgyud* means lineage.) is used for kin lineage, and it usually represents the generations or relatives on the father’s side. Benedict (1942)

also argued that, “[t]he modern Tibetans employ the term *Rus pa* in reference to the exogamic patrilineal lineage or genes, as indicated by Decider” (p. 328).

Table 1: Basic Kinship Terms in Amdo

Feminine		Masculine	
<i>A-ma che, A-yi(phyi), Ma rgan</i>	Grandmother	<i>A-myes, A-p(h)a che, A-rgya</i>	Grandfather
<i>A-ma</i>	Mother	<i>A-p(h)a che, A-rgya, A-ta</i>	Father
<i>A-ce/che, Ama(name), A-nye</i>	Father’s sister	<i>A-khu, A-p(h)a, A-rgya</i>	Father’s brother
<i>A-ce/che, A-ma che/chung, A-nye</i>	Mother’s sister	<i>A-khu, A-rgya, A-zhang</i>	Mother’s brother
<i>A-ce/che A-sdu</i>	Older sister	<i>A-bo/bu A-khu A-p(h)a A-rgya/rga A-ya Hos(phu) rgan</i>	Older brother
<i>Sha nye ma Spun ya ma Sring mo (man speaking)</i>	Younger sister	<i>Nu bo Ming bo (female speaking) Spun/sun chung ba Spun ya Sha nye</i>	Younger brother
<i>Bu mo Zhi mo</i>	Daughter	<i>Bu/bu tsha Zhi lu</i>	Son
<i>Tsha mo</i>	Granddaughter or niece	<i>Tsha bo Tsha’u</i>	Grandson or nephew
<i>A-khu A-nye A-ma (call name)</i>	Mother-in-law	<i>A-p(h)a A-myes A-rgya A-zhang</i>	Father-in-law
<i>Mna’ ma</i>	Daughter-in-law	<i>Mag pa</i>	Son-in-law
<i>A-che sru mo A-sru Sru mo</i>	Sister-in-law	<i>A-bu A-che’I mag pa A-khu (name) Mag pa</i>	Brother-in-law
	<i>Zha yi</i>	Child	
<i>A-yi Bud med Khyim pa Nag mo Rgan mo</i>	Wife	<i>Pho skyes Mag pa/ga Rgan po</i>	Husband

Therefore, anyone identified as *sha nye* should be relatives of one's mother's side, but, in Amdo, people use *sha nye* to distinguish between relatives and non-relatives. However, the classical Tibetan written form for relatives is *gnyen bshes*. Table 2 shows some basic kinship terms in classical Tibetan.

Table 2 : Basic Kinship Terms in Classical Tibetan

Feminine		Neuter		Masculine	
<i>Phyi</i> <i>Rmo</i>	Grandmother			<i>Mes</i> <i>Spo</i>	Grandfather
<i>Ma</i>	Mother			<i>Pha</i> <i>Ta</i>	Father
<i>Ne</i>	Father's sister			<i>Khu</i>	Father's brother
<i>Sru</i>	Mother's sister			<i>Shan[zhang]</i>	Mother's brother
<i>Che</i>	Older sister			<i>Phu</i> <i>Jo</i>	Older brother
<i>Srin[sring]</i>	Sister (Man speaking)			<i>Min[ming]</i>	brother
		<i>Nu</i> (same sex as speaker)	Younger sibling		
		<i>Bu</i>	Child		
		<i>Tsa</i> [tsha]	Sibling's child, child, grandchild		
<i>Sgyug</i>	mother-in-law			<i>Gyo</i>	Father-in-law
<i>Mna[mna']</i>	daughter-in-law			<i>Mag</i>	Son-in-law
				<i>Ban</i>	Uncle (by marriage)

Gender plays an important role in Tibetan kinship relations. Nomads believe that people born within seven generations of both one's father's kin and one's mother's kin are too closely related to be married. This is similar to the practice in modern western cultures of not marrying close cousins. Farmers mainly emphasize their fathers' kin as internal relatives and their mothers' kin as external relatives, and, as such, are a marriageable group with possible good affinities. For example, according to Dpa'-ris

Sangs-rgyas 's (2005) tables, a father's brother and his children are the only internal relatives for Ego (p. 64), and he confirmed that it is taboo for Ego to marry his father's brother's daughter/son because his/her father and his children are the only internal relatives to Ego (Interview, November 2011). This point hints that Ego may marry external relatives such as a father's sister's child and a mother's brother or sister's child. We may conclude that Amdobas consider both the father's family members and the mother's family members to be closely related, but they recognize the descendants in the male line as coming from a common ancestor.

This is in line with Barker's (2003) idea; "[I]t may be temporarily useful for particular purposes to view cultures as linked to specific people and places" (p. 42). Therefore, Tibetans use the body term bone to refer to relatives from their father's side of the family and use the body term flesh to refer to their mother's kin. Benedict (1942) quoted Desideri's description of Tibetan kinship system in his article:

The Thibettans [Tibetans] recognize two classes of kinship. The first are called relations of the Ruspa-cik [Rus pa gcig], or of the same bone; the second, relations of the Scia-cik [Sha khrag gcig], or of the same blood. They recognize, as relations of Ruspa-cik, or of the same bone, those who descend from a common ancestor, however remote, even when they have been divided into different branches during many generations. Relations of the Scia-cik, or the same blood, are those created by legitimate marriages. The first, though it may be exceedingly distant, is looked upon as an absolute and inviolable bar to matrimony, and any intercourse between two relations of the Ruspa-cik, or of the same bone, is regarded as incestuous, and they are shunned and loathed by everyone. The second is also a bar to marriage in the first degree of relationship; thus an uncle may not marry his niece, but marriages [sic] with a first cousin on the mother's side is allowed, and frequently occurs. (p. 328)

Rus pa gcig or *Rus pa* indicates Tibetan groups or clans descended from the male line from a common ancestor. Tibetans are organized into kinship groups based on descent in the male line, but many groups also accept bilinear or groups descended from both male and female lines to practice exogamy. In any case, the division of male and female, or internal and external exists in order to make a binary. The analysis mainly focuses on basic kinship terms, although Tibetans have well-developed kinship terminology, and there are both secondary and respectful kinship terms. As Benedict (1942) observed, "Three types of terms can be distinguished in the Tibetan nomenclature, viz. basic or root terms, secondary terms, and combined terms" (p. 314). Benedict (1942) also argued that "[T]wenty-four basic terms are employed in Tibetan, 12 of which are masculine, 9 feminine, and 3 neuter" (Table 2) (p. 314).

As I mentioned above, basic Tibetan kinship terms can be classified as an abstract level binary masculine: feminine. Under this framework we can have many other concrete binaries. Before we examine this further, it is helpful to quote Benedict in order to gain a clearer idea of the method used to understand Tibetan kinship terms. Benedict (1942) argued that:

The bulk of the nomenclature consists of basic terms, usually in combination with prefixed 'a- or with one of the suffixed sex modifiers: *po-bo-pho-pa* (masc.), *mo-ma* (fem.), e.g., 'a-ma-ma "mother," 'a-pha-pha "father," 'a-phyi-phyi-mo "grandmother," 'a-khu-khu-bo "father's brother," a-shan-shan-po "mother's brother," bu-pho "son," bu-mo "daughter," mag-pa "son-in-law," mna-ma "daughter-in-law." (p. 314)

Benedict also mentioned respectful Tibetan kinship terms. Amdobas rarely use these terms, and so I will only discuss these briefly. For those seeking further information on formal terminology, Table 3 and Table 4 provide a list of respectful kinship terms used in Amdo and in classical Tibetan. If we compare Table 3 to Table 4, it is

Table 3: Common Respectful Kinship Terms in Amdo

Feminine		Masculine	
<i>Yum</i>	Mother	<i>Yab</i>	Father
<i>Sras mo</i>	Daughter	<i>Sras</i>	Son
<i>Sku sring</i>	Sister	<i>Sku spun</i>	Brother
<i>Rig ma, Yum, Lcam mo</i>	Wife	<i>Yab</i>	Husband

obvious that Tibetans in Amdo have kept the core elements of respectful terms from the classical Tibetan. As matter of regional language habit or practice, the Amdobas tend to combine basic terms with "body or body of Buddha" or *sku*. Here it represents the respected person, to distinguish respectful terms and basic terms when they use these terms in daily life. For instance, *sku sring* indicates his or her sister, but not one's own sister. It is also important to mention that in Amdo, people use *lcam mo* for wife rather than sister. The term *sku* here plays a similar role as prefixed *a-* does in the Amdo dialect.

Table 4: Respectful Kinship Terms in Classical Tibetan

Feminine		Neuter		Masculine	
<i>Yum</i>	Mother			<i>Yab</i>	Father
				<i>Gcen po</i>	Old brother (man speaking)
				<i>Gcung po</i>	Younger brother (man speaking)
<i>Lcam mo</i>	Sister (man speaking)				
		<i>Mched(spun)</i>	Brother		
		<i>Sras</i>	Child		
		<i>Dbon</i>	Sibling's child, grandchild		

Table 5: Variations of Meanings of Kinship Terms

Signifier	Meanings
<i>A-bo</i>	Older brother, boy, modifier for addressing an elder male male
<i>A-bu</i>	Older brother, boy, modifier for addressing an elder male
<i>A-che/je</i>	Elder sister, mother's sister, sister-in-law, modifier for addressing an elder female
<i>A-khu</i>	Father's brother, mother's brother, father-in-law, elder brother, modifier for addressing an elder male
<i>A-ma</i>	Mother, mother's sister, mother-in-law, grandmother
<i>A-m(y)es</i>	Grandfather, father-in-law, very old man
<i>A-nye</i>	Mother's sister, father's sister, mother-in-law, woman, nun
<i>A-p(h)a</i>	Father, elder brother, father-in-law
<i>A-rga</i>	Older brother, modifier for addressing an elder male
<i>A-rgya</i>	Father, elder brother, father-in-law, modifier for addressing an elder male
<i>A-sdi</i>	Sister (only in Dpa'ris)
<i>A-spo'u</i>	Grandfather, old man
<i>A-sru</i>	Sister-in-law, women; in Machu all brides are called <i>srumo</i>
<i>A-zhang</i>	Mother's brother, father's brother, father-in-law
<i>A-ba</i>	Father
<i>A-yi</i>	Grandmother, wife, women
<i>Bu/bu tsha</i>	Son, boy
<i>Bu mo</i>	Daughter, girl
<i>Mag pa(ga)</i>	Son-in-law, husband, brother-in-law
<i>Mna' ma</i>	Daughter-in-law, wife, bride of that family
<i>Mag mo</i>	Woman, wife
<i>Rgan mo</i>	Wife, old woman
<i>Rgan po</i>	Husband, old man
<i>Skyes pa</i>	Husband, man
<i>Sru mo</i>	Sister-in-law, in Machu County all wives of siblings are called <i>srumo</i>
<i>Tsha mo</i>	Granddaughter, niece
<i>Tsha bo</i>	Grandson, nephew
<i>Zhi lu</i>	Son, boy
<i>Zhi mo</i>	Daughter, girl

In the research paradigm, the terms include the prefixed *a-* and suffixed sex modifiers to enable the readers to better pronounce and understand the terms' usage. Whereas Benedict based his analysis on the literary forms and root words of basic Tibetan kinship terminology, in my research, I attempted to study the kinship terms and their variants in daily use. For these reasons, Benedict's findings and the analysis and conclusions of this chapter will differ significantly. Finally, in the data collection process, it was noted that due to the differences in local usage and interpretation of kinship terms, there was some difficulty in developing a common set of kinship terms among the Amdobas. As such, one cannot expect to generalize and compare the spoken terminology to the level possible with the classical written language. We will discuss this problem in the examination of Table 1.

The data also show that Tibetans from nomadic and agricultural areas have different criteria by which they determine who is related and who is not. The criteria that is used to determine how far removed one's relatives are also differs between nomadic and agricultural peoples. These groups employ different terms for specific kin. For instance, some Tibetan farmers in Amdo refer to grandfather as *a-spo'u*, *a-ya*, *a-rgya* or *a-p(h)a* rather than *a-myes* (*a-mes*), which is used in classical Tibetan and many other places in Amdo (Table 5). As Barker (2003) mentioned, "Language is action", and meanings are temporarily stabilized by social convention for practical purposes in the context of their usage" (p. 37).

The prefixed *a-* with kinship terms is characteristic of the Tibetan language as well as with several cases in Chinese Mandarin. As The New Tibetan Dictionary stated that prefixing *a-* to a kinship term is a show of respect for older kin (Bsam-gtan, 2006, p. 868). Therefore, Amdobas usually prefix *a-* to most kinship terms when they address their older kin. One might gain a clearer picture of kinship terminology if the kinship terms are analyzed case by case. As Dumont (2004) observed, the common features of kinship terminology, including, "classification according to generations, distinction of sex, distinction of two kinds of relatives inside certain generations, distinction of age." (p. 176). Bao Zhiming and Wande Kaer (1997) also noted that nomads in northern Tibet categorize their kinship terms according to a similar principle (pp. 365-366).

Generally speaking, Tibetans and/or Amdobas recognize both paternal and maternal kin equally as Ego's kin. Amdobas have different terms for labeling Ego's father's and mother's generation (both brother and sister of father and mother). The distinction of sex and age traditionally affect the kinship terms used for siblings, especially younger siblings, but, in the present day, local people mix up some terms when they use them in their daily lives.

Dumont (2004) argued that "[P]erhaps it may be said in general that the terminology was not considered for a moment in itself but in terms of other aspects of kinship, in fact related to but different from it; at the same time it was still felt as irrational and one hastened to explain without accurately describing " (p. 176). To gain an accurate and

clear picture of kinship terms in Amdo, I will discuss each kinship term in the next section.

3.0 Amdo Tibetan Kinship Terms

3.1 Consanguinity

3.1.1 Grandparents

Amdobas commonly use *a-yi* for grandmother (both father's mother and mother's mother). The meaning of *yi* can be traced back to the classical kinship term *phyi* (Table 2) that stands for grandmother with the sex modifier *mo*, but Amdobas omit the root letter *ph* when they say *phyi*, and it sounds like *yi* if we only pronounce the sub-joined letter *ya* and the vowel *i*. It is clear that *a-yi* is combination of prefixing *a-* and *yi* without its root letter *ph*. This is not just a kinship terminology phenomenon in Amdo but a linguistic trend. Another example of avoiding pronunciation of a root letter is the verb *byed* (do or doing something). In daily life, Amdobas say this word like *yed* or *yid*, omitting the phoneme of the root letter *b* and losing the original sound shed/ched. I will not dig deeply into this linguistic issue because this chapter mainly focuses on kinship terms rather than on the arbitrary pronunciation tendencies among Amdo Tibetan speakers. However, it is useful to notice that the uncertainty of pronunciation in Amdo dialects affects the understanding of kinship terms. Similar pronunciation issues with kinship terms will be discussed later.

Another issue with kinship terminology is that the meanings are uncertain, and one term can have many meanings. We noticed that people from some places refer to their wives, women, or a mother's elder sister as *a-yi* or *a-ye*. Many people in Amdo use *a-yi* to address an old woman who is over 60 years old. In Dpa'ris, Tibetans refer to their grandmother as *a-ma-yi*, and it is combination of *a-ma* and *phyi mo*. Some villagers, especially in nomadic areas, use *ma rgan* or *a-ma che* for grandmother. These two terms have a similar meaning of great or old mother, since the root letter is *ma* (mother), and it is modified by two different adjectives, *rgan* and *che*, old and great. *A-ma che* also means mother's older sister in some regions of Amdo. As a Tibetan saying indicates, "uncle or *a-khu* is half of father, aunt or *a-ne* is half of mother." (Tibetan: *pha'i phyed a-khu, ma'I phyed a-ne*)

Similarly, Amdobas refer to a grandfather as *a-pha che*, which means great or old father. Later in this chapter, we will learn that some villagers use this term to describe an older brother or a father's older brother. In some Amdo areas, people use the term *a-rgya* to refer to their grandfather, father, or brother. However, the original meaning of the term *rgya* could be older brother, because *rgya* has many meanings and one of them is range or scope. Dpa'ris Sangs-rgyas confirmed that old Tibetan textbooks used *a-rgya* for

older brother. The opposite of this term is *a-che*, which refers to older sister (Interview, December 2009). Today, the most common usage of this term is to refer to a father in the nomadic areas of Amdo and to an older brother or an elder man in agricultural areas. *A-spo* (pronounced like a-bu) is the most popular term for grandfather among Tibetan villagers in *Bayan County* and *Grotshang*. This term evolved from classical Tibetan *spo-bo* “father’s father or mother’s father.” However, the most common term for grandfather is *a-myes* in colloquial and *mes po* in classical writing though some scholars assume that *mes po* is respectful form of *spo bo*. The term *mes* or *myes* means ancestor. In some areas in Amdo one uses *a-myes* to call their father-in-law. According to Benedict’s (1942) explanation of this matter:

As result of cross-cousin marriage, the mother’s brother becomes the father-in-law, and the mother’s brother’s son becomes the wife’s brother. With the advent of teknonymy, the father-in-law is called ‘grandfather’ (the child’s term), and, as a result of the above equation, mother’s brother becomes ‘grandfather.’ (p. 327)

I noticed that some groups in Rtsekhog County where a bride or wife has to address all kinsmen who are older than she is as *a-myes* or grandfather. This finding may demonstrate that some Tibetans have a tradition of addressing fathers-in-law and other in-laws of patrilineal kinsmen as “grandfather” without cross-cousin marriage. It is obvious Tibetans practice cross-cousin marriage, but the problem is that the newly married couple has to address their in-laws before their child has a chance to address their grandparents from both sides of the male and female parents.

Many Tibetan children or youth in villages often call elder men (over 50 years old) *a-myes*, though they do not have any kinship relation with these elders. Similarly, young boys and girls call elder women *a-yi*. We can assume other people may use other terms to refer to their grandfathers, because language usage itself is arbitrary. As Barker (2003) pointed out, “Meaning is the product of signs and social practice. We cannot distinguish between them” (p. 37). In modern language, Tibetans have used the term *mes* to create a new term *mes rgyal* to mean motherland since they translate the Chinese word Zuguo 祖国 directly into the Tibetan language. The Chinese word *zu* and Tibetan *mes* have the same meaning of “forefather.” However, Tibetans do not have a tradition of recording family lineage like the Han Chinese do. Tibetans have to transmit their family history through oral stories and memorization. Therefore, an ancestor often can be only traced back to three generations born before Ego and for three generations born after Ego. That means that the descendants from a common ancestor will not have blood ties after seven generations have passed. Amdobas think that an eighth generation from a common ancestor is one’s last relative. However, Father’s father is *a-mes* or grandfather and grandfather’s father is *yang mes* or great-grandfather. Great-grandfather’s father is *gzhis mes* or great-great-grandfather. As Benedict (1942) explained:

The element *yan* [*yang*] is probably to be identified with *yan*[*yang*] “again,” while *gshi* [*gzhis*] is connected with *gshi(-ma)* [*gzhis ma*] “original cause,” used in the sense of time, e.g. *gshi-nin* [*gzhis ning*] two years ago. (pp. 315-316)

These two elements or determinants, *yang* and *gzhis* also modify *tsha* or grandchild to indicate great-grandchild (*yang tsha*) and great-great-grandchild (*gzhis tsha*) respectively.

3.1.2 Parents and Their Siblings

A-ma is a very common kinship term used by Tibetans in Amdo, and it refers to mother. Benedict (1942) pointed out, “[T]he regular parent terms in Tibetan are ‘a-ma ‘mother’ and ‘a-pha ‘father,’ from the almost universally extended TB¹⁹ roots *ma and *p’a, respectively” (p. 316). Although there are many alternative terms for father in Amdo and other Tibetan regions, all Amdobas recognize *a-ma* as mother without any other alternative terms. Amdobas modify this term with suffixes to create new meanings. For instance, some people in Amdo use *a-ma che* (great or older mother) or *a-ma chung* (small or younger mother) to refer to a mother's older sister or younger sister respectively. We also see from above that some natives use this term to indicate grandmother when *a-ma*, modifies *rgan mo* (old woman) or *che* (big or great). Of course, *a-ma rgan mo* is not only a term for grandmother but also for mother. This lengthy term can be shortened as *ma rgan* to indicate mother. Interestingly the English, Mandarin and many other languages contain an “m” element for mother, for example, *mother*, *mum*, *mami*, and *mama* (妈妈), or *muqin* (母亲), etc. We do not know whether this is an accident or the result of diffusion.

In contrast, Amdobas have many different expressions for father, and those terms might have meanings other than father. The term *a-p(h)a* is common in Amdo but it is not the only term used for father. The use of *a-p(h)a* to specify father is not only used by Amdobas but is also found in classical Tibetan. In Mandarin (and other languages) one can find similar terms for father, for example, *ba* (爸), *baba* (爸爸), etc. Other terms for father found in Amdo are more difficult to explain but are also more unique. Many groups (specially in nomadic areas) in Amdo use *a-rgya* to refer to one's father. In this case, the term for father, *a-pha*, loses its original character and it indicates old brother. Many Amdobas also use *a-rgya* to designate their father-in-law, older brother, or elder man.

The arbitrary nature of these terms is enough to argue that a signifier may mean many things in a given context, and that it is more complicated than previously thought. Sometimes one signifier has many meanings; on the other hand, many signifiers can share one meaning. *A-p(h)a* has various meanings among the Amdobas because this term can imply father in some areas and older brother in others. Amusingly for Amdobas, a

¹⁹ Tibetan-Burman

common usage of the term *a-p(h)a* is to modify Chinese authority and the Han Chinese for showing respect or fear, *a-pa gong ja* (father authority) (Chinese: 公家; pinyin: Gongjia. It means public or authority) and *a-pa rgya rgan* (father Chinese) respectively.

It is hard to judge the point of this usage because these two newly created phrases seem to have both iconic and respectful meanings. If one asks another person for something, he or she often uses *a-pa lo lo* “please father or I beg you.” Therefore, *a-pa* is not just a kinship term, but it has evolved to have other meanings. Furthermore, there are additional localized terms such as *a-rgya* and *a-ta/da* used for father. The neighboring ethnic group Tu (Chinese: 土族) nationality or *Monguer* also has the same tradition to for calling one’s father *a-ta/da*. Benedict mentions, *a-ta* is a standard term for father in western Tibet. He also believes that this root is represented by Gyarung [Rgyalrong] (western China) *a-ta-ta*, Akha (northern Assam), *a-ta*, and dialectical Burmese *ta-ta* “father” (Benedict, 1942, 316). Tibetans who live with a mixture of ethnic group villagers prefer to use *a-ta* to address their fathers. Dpa’-ris Sangs-rgyas definitely believes that the term *a-ta/da* originated from the Chinese (Interview, October 2009).

My fieldwork and experience in Amdo make clear that Amdobas also used *ha* or *ha rgan* for father in nomadic regions. As a language practice in Amdo, the phonemes *ph* and *h* are often interchangeable. For instance, the Tibetan word for pig is *phag*, and in Amdo many nomadic herders used *hag* for pig. Some people even use *a-ba* (sound a-wa) to call father and Benedict (1942) observed that the Lahuli people use ‘*a-wa* for father’s brother (p.316). In Amdo Tibetans often use “*khvo’I a-ba* (pronounced a-wa) *a-ma*” (“your father and mother”) when someone tries to curse or insult another one. I have not found any evidence for the origin of this term and its meaning. However, it is crucial to master the local language when one tries to understand a local culture. Thus, it is not possible to find a specific cultural system through studying kinship terms in Amdo. As Barker (2003) summarized Derrida and Wittgenstein’s argument:

The arbitrary relationship between signs and referents... language, in the context of social usage, can be temporarily stabilized for practical purposes ... For Wittgenstein, a meaningful expression is one that can be given a use by living human beings. (p. 113)

Amdobas have a variety of terms for addressing a father but only one term for addressing a mother. The reason might be that one can almost find out who one’s mother is, but one may not know one’s genetic father. Fox (1983) points out that the mother-child unit as the basic mammalian and perhaps the human unit and the logic of kinship is developed from there (p. 2). Sexual relations in Amdo can be quite liberal by western standards. It is common for women in Amdo to have children out of wedlock. In many nomadic groups in Tibet, potential husbands accept women who already have children. This observation does not mean that all Amdobas accept unmarried women with children born out of wedlock. But the situation is totally different from what some western scholars find, and it contradicts their claims that Tibetan nomads readily accept unmarried women with

children because it shows that the women are able to bear children. Modern-day Amdobas frequently interact among themselves and with other ethnic groups, and they accept the social norms of others. Therefore, unmarried women with children are not always accepted and may even face being ostracized or shamed. They may also have problems finding a husband. As Tibetans in Amdo are influenced by the values of the Han Chinese, they are not as willing to accept women with a child or children born out of wedlock. Many men even reject divorced women who have custody of the children from a former marriage.

Often the mother will keep the children if a couple is divorced. This tradition also helps a baby to know the genetic mother but not the genetic father. This argument may not be strong enough to give a definitive explanation for developing the different terms for father in Tibet, especially in Amdo. The usage of kinship terms is uncertain and puzzling among Amdobas, and maybe even in Tibet as a whole.

In Amdo, *a-ne* used for father's sister and some places it used for mother's sister as well. It also has meaning of nun, mother-in-law, woman, or female. As Benedict (1942) wrote:

The term '*a-ne-ne-ne-mo* is applied to 'father's brother's wife' (Das) and mother's brother's wife' (JASCHKE) [sic] as well as to 'father's sister,' and has the additional meanings 'woman, female' and even 'nun' (CSOMA) [sic]. In Western Tibetan, this term is used for 'wife, partner, and spouse' (JASCHKE) [sic.] (p. 317)

The meanings are not consistent. In English, the terms uncle and aunt have very fixed definitions. According to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2009, online), an uncle is the brother of someone's mother or father or the husband of someone's aunt. An aunt is the sister of someone's mother or father or the wife of someone's uncle. Dpa'-ris Sangs-rgyas (2005) argued that *a-ne* is literally a specific term for father's brother's wife, and *ma ce* and *ma sring* refer to a mother's older and younger sister respectively. Father's sister is addressed by *snyid mo* and her husband called as *snyid po* (p. 63). Dpa'-ris Sangs-rgyas' article also provided specific terms for father and mother's brother and sister's child with a table, which also revealed that Tibetans practice a patrilineal (and possibly bilateral) system.

Researchers may need to pay special attention to the variation of this term when they conduct fieldwork or research on kinship terms in Amdo. We should not accept one meaning and ignore the others. Villagers in Amdo may use the term *a-ne* to identify different people. It is difficult to figure out which person they are referring to even if the researcher knows the context or is in the environment. For instance, if one says, "My *a-ne* xxx (her name) will visit us," we cannot exactly know the relationship of the speaker and the woman. She could be his or her father's sister, mother's sister, uncle's wife, or mother-in-law. But here we can exclude the other meanings such as woman and nun according to the discourse of the speaker. It is crucial to ask specific questions of the speaker in order to clarify whom he or she is talking about. It is a tradition in Amdo for

local people to add a person's name after the kinship term except *a-ma* and *ap(h)a* if it refers to father because some regions *a-p(h)a* referred to an older brother, and one adds names after *a-p(h)a*. One person normally has one mother and father, and so he or she does not need to mention their names. In contrast, a person can have more than one uncle, aunt, brother, sister, and even grandfather and grandmother if one uses the same term *a-myes* and *a-yi* to call one's father's father and mother's father, father's mother, and mother's mother.

In some places, people use *a-ma che/ce* for mother's mother, and the confusion is that some villagers apply *a-ma che* for mother's old sister. Benedict (1942, Table 2) argued that *sru* is used for referring to the mother's sister in classical Tibetan, but I have not found a similar tradition in any place in Amdo. The *New Tibetan Dictionary* also says that *sru* is *sru mo*, and it means an older brother's wife when her husband's younger siblings address her (Bsam-gtan, 2006, p. 829). A married woman, for instance, is referred to as *ma sru*, *ma sru mo*. According to my fieldwork (2007-2012), most people in Amdo prefer to use *a-ne* for both father's sister and mother's sister. Dpa'-ris Sangs-rgyas (2005) argues that *snyid mo* is a father's older sister (p.63). *Snyid mo* has another meaning according to Bsam-gtan (2006, p. 829), and I will discuss it later when I analyze affinitive terms.

Some Amdobas mistakenly use one term, either *a-zhang* or *a-ku*, to refer both the father's brother and mother's brother, though there are two different words for these two kin in the Amdo dialect and in classical Tibetan. *Zhang* is the correct kinship term for a mother's brother in classical Tibetan. Some researchers believe that in many traditional societies, the mother's brother plays a significant role regarding his sister's family issues. Tibetans have a similar attitude toward one's mother's brother, too. *A-zhang* is supposed to be a powerful figure in the family, and he may have right to decide his nephew's personal matters, especially regarding marriage. Today mother's brother (or *a-zhang*) does not have practical or real power in Amdo, though he may have symbolic power regarding issues of his sister's family. For instance, he has the right to receive a special gift when his sister's children have become engaged or have a wedding ceremony. He may also have the right to determine and/or negotiate a marriage. However, Amdobas commonly use the term bride-giver (*a-zhang tsang*) to describe the bride's family or relatives during a wedding ceremony. The marital home or bride-receiver (*gnyen tsang*) is the groom's family, but literally *tsang* means "nest or home."

The term *a-zhang* is also used for father-in-law in some places in Amdo. Many Amdobas distinguish the term *a-khu*, "father's brother" and *a-zhang* "mother's brother" in daily life; an outsider may be confused by the term *a-khu* because this term also has different meanings to Amdo villagers. Benedict (1942) observed that, "[...] Tibetans have shifted **k'u* from 'mother's brother' to 'father's brother.' This development, peculiar to Tibetan, certainly is to be interpreted as a product of a distinctively Tibetan feature, fraternal polyandry." (pp. 317-318). Levi-Strauss (1969 [1949]) argued:

Actually, one other hypothesis would account better for this characteristic of the Tibetan terminology, viz., the transition from a matrilineal organization to the present patrilineal organization. In the first case, it is the maternal uncle, and in the second, the paternal uncle, who occupies the foremost position alongside the father in the family household, and the transference of the one term to the other would thus be perfectly clear. In our opinion, this terminological evolution constitutes the strongest possible argument that might be produced in favour of the former existence of matrilineal descent in Tibet. (p. 372)

These two foreign interpretations are unreliable because fraternal polyandry did not become the main type of marriage system in Tibet, although a small number of Tibetans still practice it in some areas.

In modern day Amdo, the maternal uncles have special powers regarding their sisters' family issues, especially when they concern marriage and children. The maternal uncles did not lose their important position until recently in Tibet, though there appears to have been a transition from a matrilineal organization to the present patrilineal organization among Tibetans, because the patrilineal system exists in many nations in the world.

There could be other unknown reasons why there was a transference between *khu* and *zhang*, if the shift actually occurred. This shift could be a random behavior or misuse of the terms by younger generations. For example, in Rtsekhog County and several other places of Amdo where people use the term *a-p(h)a*, for father and *a-rgya*, for older brother. They use *a-rgya* to address their fathers and *a-p(h)a* to indicate their older brothers. Some neighboring villages adopted half of this transition, and they use *a-rgya* to address father and a variation of this term, *a-rga* to address their older brothers. Furthermore, some groups in Amdo only use *a-khu* to identify both the father and mother's brother, and they use *a-zhang* to identify a father-in-law. Other groups employ *a-zhang* to designate both father and mother's brother. However, these examples show that the shift of kinship terms could be a random behavior or a misuse of the terms rather than a conscious effort to transform the local marriage system.

In Amdo, some people just modify the names of their older brothers with *a-khu* to identify their brotherhood relationship. Others simply apply *a-khu* for father's brother. It is true that we really cannot figure out whom a person is talking about or whether it is the father's brother or an older brother when one mentions his or her *a-khu*. The only solution to this situation is to ask more questions about the relationship. In addition, some Amdobas even used *a-khu* to refer to a monk. They usually add *a-khu* before the monk's name to classify his monkhood. For instance, *A-khu* Tshul-khrims-rgya-mtsho is a combination of *a-khu* and a monk's name, Tshul-khrims-rgya-mtsho. *A-khu* is also a term that serves as a modifier for addressing an elder male in some places.

3.1.3 Siblings and Their Affiance

Amdobas use the term *spun* to identify siblings, but some Amdobas pronounce it like *si en* while others pronounce it as *huun*. Amdobas often mispronounce *spa*, which sounds like *pa*. For example, the Tibetan word for hair is *spu* and sounds like *pu*, but Amdobas pronounce it as *su* or *hu*. Sung Kuoming and Lha-byams-rgyal (2005) also observed that the Tibetan language has the equivalent for the more general sibling term: *spun* (p. 110). Benedict (1942) assumed that *spun* is a Tibetan equivalent term for the English term cousin. In fact, there is no term for cousin in the Amdo dialect, and it is hard to find a term for cousin in classical Tibetan. Dpa'-ris Sangs-rgyas argued that *spun* is made by the abbreviation of *phu nu* (older brother and younger brother) and this abbreviation indicates "brothers." Today, this term includes sister because many Amdobas use combination terms such as *spun ya ma* for sister (Interview, December 2011). Han Chinese also does not have equivalent term for sibling, and the English-Chinese dictionaries translate sibling into *xiongdi* or *jiemei* (Chinese: 兄弟或姐妹), which literary that means older brother and younger brother (or older sister and younger sister). Obviously, the original meaning of this term is brothers exclusively because *xiong* (Chinese: 兄) refers to older brother and *di* (Chinese: 弟) refers to younger brother. The expansion of this term can identify cousin in both Tibetan and Chinese. For example, Tibetans use *pha spun* to indicate father's brother's child and *pha ma spun* to designate father's sister's child. Chinese add determinants 表 (pinyin: Biao) or 堂 (pinyin: Tang) to 兄弟 for identifying one's relation to cousins.

Tibetans developed different terms for siblings according to the distinctions of sex and age. There is no common term used for an older brother in Amdo. Many places use *a-khu* to indicate one's older brother. As I discussed above, the original meaning of this term is father's brother, but many Amdobas use this term to indicate mother's brother. *A-bo* (sound a-wo), *a-bu* (sound a-wu), *a-p(h)a*, *sha nye*, *a-rga* (sound a-ga) and *a-rgya* (sound a-ja) are also used for older brother in many areas of Amdo. Benedict mentioned that "[N]ote also Tib. 'a-bo, a variant of 'a-po 'grandfather,' which both SCHMIDT) [sic] SCHMIDT and DESGODINS [sic] equate with 'a-jo 'older brother'" (p. 320).

Educated Tibetans in Amdo understand that *jo-jo* refers to older brother in Lhasa, but they do not use it in their daily lives in Amdo. *A-rga* could be a variant of *a-rgya*, but *rgya* leaves out its subjoined letter *ya*, and the pronunciation become *rga*. These terms for older brother can modify an elder male's name for showing respect if he is older than the person who addresses him. Certainly, younger cousins use these terms to address their elder male cousins according to the regional tradition because different groups' have different customs for choosing different terms for older brothers when young siblings address their elders. For instance, in Gcantsha County, people use *a-rgya* to address an older brother but in Rtsekhog County *a-rgya* is used for father and *a-p(h)a* is used for older brother. Therefore, it is impossible to find a common term for older brother and father that is used throughout all of Amdo.

Both *a-bu* and *a-bo* are used for older brother and boy in some areas in Amdo. For instance, villagers from Rdobis Township used *a-bu* (sounds like a-wu) for older brother and *a-bo* (sounds like a-wo) for boy. In contrast, people from the Grotshang tribe, which is not far from Rdobis, used *a-bo* for older brother and *a-bu* for boy. A Tibetan scholar, Yon-tan, observed that in Grotshang Tibetans use *a-bo* for older brother and *bu tsha* (sound like wu-tsa) for younger brother and boy (Interview, August 2010). *Bu tsha* is a combination of two Tibetan terms *bu*, “boy or son” and *tsha* “nephew or grandson.” It is a kind of misuse or deviation of this term in this region. Therefore, kinship terms in Amdo have different meanings, and these terms even confuse the locals. *Phu bo*, *gcen* (respectful form) and *Jo jo* are the written forms of older brother. This is why some people in Dpa’ris still use *a-jig* or *a-jo* for older brother. *A-jig* is the diacritical form of *a-jo* (Dpa’ris Sangs-rgyas, Interview, December 2009). Writers in Amdo prefer to use *Phu bo* when they write a novel or article, though people do not use these written forms in daily life.

Comparatively, *a-che/ce* is another common kinship term among Amdobas, and it normally refers to one’s older sister. It also matches the form of classical/writing in Tibetan. The pronunciation of this term may vary from region to region. Another function of this term is to modify an older woman’s name in order to show respect. Therefore, it creates confusion if one also uses this term to modify his or her own older sister’s name. For example, if one refers to someone *a-che Lha-mo* (a Tibetan female name), others cannot really tell whether she is his or her older sister or just an acquainted older female. In Dpa’ris, people have their own unique term for old sister, that is *a-sdu*, and it is hard to find the correct spelling of this term. I have used *a-sdu* here according to Dpa’ris Sangs-rgyas’s suggestion, though he is also not sure about the origin of this term and its meaning. It is certain that *a-che/ce* is used for sister-in-law or older brother’s wife in Dpa’ris (Lha-mo-‘tsho, Interview, September 2010).

An older sister and older brother may use different terms to identify their younger siblings. There are various ways to refer to one’s younger brother and sister in Amdo. As Benedict (1942, p. 314) pointed out (Table 2), the different sexes may use different terms to refer to his or her opposite sex. For instance, a female may describe her younger brother as *ming po* (or *mying po*). According to the *New Tibetan Dictionary*, “a female uses *ming po* to refer to her male siblings of the same parents” (Bsam-gtan, 2006, p. 588). Benedict (1942) stated that “Tibetan terms showing sex-of-speaker distinction, viz. *srin-mo* ‘sister (man sp.)’ and *min-po* [*Ming po*] ‘brother (woman sp.)’” (p. 320). This means a female also uses this term to identify her older brother. Today in Amdo, many females use the terms such *a-khu*, *a-bo*, *sha nye*, *a-bu*, and *a-rga* instead of *ming po* to refer to their older brothers. Amdobas pronounce this term as *mying bo* in their daily lives. Both males and females use *nu bo* to refer to one’s younger brother in some places. As rule of Tibetan kinship terms, only a male uses *nu bo* for his younger brother. In reality, girls also use the same term to refer to their brothers in Amdo. *Sbun ya* or *sbun ya chung ba*

(other brother or younger brother) are other common local way to identify a man's younger brother. Moreover, many urban Tibetan girls use the Chinese term 弟弟 (pinyin: Didi) to designate their younger brother.

An older brother normally uses *sring mo* to identify his female siblings of the same parents (Bsam-gtan et al. 2006, pp. 826-827). Sometimes an older brother only uses this term for a younger sister because the term for older sister is *a-che*. A respectful way to identify one's older sister is *sring rgan ma* or older sister. Urban Tibetan men use the Chinese term *meimei* 妹妹 to identify their younger sisters, though this term gradually has become a romantic term in China because it identifies a man's mistress when a man has a young lover.

In Amdo, there is no specific term used to identify a girl's younger sister, and often Amdobas use a descriptive term *spun ya ma*, which means sister. According to the *New Tibetan Dictionary*, *nu mo* is the right term to identify a female's younger sister (Bsam-gtan et al. 2006, p. 433) but in Amdo many people do not distinguish these terms, and women use *sring mo* and/or *spun ya ma* to identify their younger sisters. Sung Kuo-ming and Lha-byams-rgyal (2005) pointed out, "*sring-mo* is used when it relates to an elder brother and *nu-mo* relates to an elder sister" (p. 110).

3.1.4 Parallel Cousins and Cross-Cousins

Today's Amdo dialect does not have specific language for distinguishing parallel cousin and cross-cousin. As I mentioned above, Amdobas expand the term for sibling to identify one's cousins. However, Dpa'-ris Sangs-rgyas (2005) observed that Tibetans have specific terms to designate various cousins. For instance, a father's brother's child is called *gcen po*, *gcung po*, *gcen mo* or *gcung mo* accordingly by age and sex. A father's sister's child should be called *pha sring skyes* for male and *pha sring skyes ma* for female. A mother's brother's child is called *zhang skyes spun* for male and *zhang skyes spun ma* for female (p.63). Obviously, Dpa'-ris Sangs-rgyas only found a specific term for a father's brother's child but not for other cousins. He created other terms with descriptions or a combination of kinship terms according to Chinese system. Perhaps his creation of these terms is just a semantic translation of Chinese terms into Tibetan terms. We also should notice that Levi-Strauss (1969 [1949]) wrote, "[T]he archaic Chinese system and the Tibetan system are thus not only structurally similar but are linguistically connected" (p.374). However, Benedict (1942) asserted that *gcen* and *gcung* are the respectful forms of older and younger brother respectively and they are derivative of Tibetan term *che* (great, old) and *chung* (little, young) (p. 330). Educated Tibetans certainly know that *gcen gcung* means brothers (older brother and younger brother) and it is similar to *phu nu* (brothers).

Today, Amdobas use *pha spun* (father's brother's child) or *ma spun* (mother's sister's child) to refer to a parallel cousin and *pha ma spun* (father's sister's child or

mother's brother's child) for cross-cousin. We should be cautious about these terms when hearing or using them because in some places in Amdo, *pha spun* refers to brothers and/or sisters who have the same father but a different mother. *Ma spun* refers to brothers and/or sisters who have the same mother but a different father. *Pha ma spun* indicates that brothers and/or sisters have the same father and the same mother.

3.1.5 Sons and Daughters

There are two common terms, *zhi lu* and *zhi mo*, (or *byi lu* and *byi mo*) used to identify one's son and daughter in Amdo. None of the Tibetan scholars can demonstrate the correct spelling of *zhi lu* and *zhi mo*. Some Tibetan scholars say these two terms should be written *byi lu* or *byi mo* because of their pronunciation. In this case, the sounds are similar, but the meanings may be different. *Byi mo* means a woman who has an illegitimate sexual relationship. *Byi bo/po* means a man who has an illegitimate sexual relationship. Some Tibetans also believe that the corrected spelling of this term is *byis lu* and *byis mo* because *byis pa* is the right word for child in written Tibetan. The word *lu* is similar to the word *bu* and the origin of the term *zhi lu* is *byis bu* "baby child or son." *Bu* is a formal form for son or little boy, and *lu* is an informal form or dialect with the same meanings. For instance, pills or small ball is called *ril lu* in the Amdo dialect and *ril bu* in the written language. Another example is *rtol lu* "kind of little yak or baby yak"²⁰ in Amdo dialect and *rtol bo* in written language. Moreover, the sound of these two terms like *gzhis lu* and *gzhis mo* when people from Rmachu County and Golok say these two words in their daily lives. Therefore, *zhi lu* and *zhi mo* could be the right way of spelling so far, though we still do not know the meaning and origin of *zhi lu* and *zhi mo*. In classical written form, son and daughter are indicated by *bu* and *bu mo*. These two terms are also used for boy and girl in the Tibetan language. It is important to know that different villagers have their own usage of these terms. Many Amdobas are familiar with *bu* and *bu mo* but rarely use them in their daily lives.

3.1.6 Grandchildren

The further descending generations were indicated by a Tibetan term *tsha* (grandchildren). As Benedict (1942) mentions (Table 2) *tsha* refers to siblings' children and grandchildren. *Tsha bo* refers to male and *tsha mo* refers to female. Both grandson and nephew are indicated by *tsha bo*, which some people pronounce as *tsha'u* in Amdo. *Tsha mo* is used for granddaughter and niece. Benedict (1942) also pointed out:

²⁰ *Rtol lu* is a baby yak whose father is a yak and whose mother is a mdzo mo (offspring of a yak mother and ox father).

The compound terms for kin of the 3rd and 4th descending generations are based on *tsha* ‘grandchild,’ viz. [*yang-tsha*]*yan-tsha* ‘great-grandchild’ (cf. [*yang-mes*]*yan-mes* ‘great-grandfather’), *yun-tsha* ‘great-great-grandchild’ (*yun*-cannot be analyzed), also [*gzhis-tsha*]*gshi-tsha* ‘great-great-grandchild,’ cited by SCHMIDT) [sic] (cf. [*gzhis-mes*]*gshi-mes* ‘great-great-grandfather’). (p. 321)

Benedict did not analyze the term *yun of yun-tsha*, but according to the meaning, this term should be *tsha gzbug*. Amdobas have a phrase *tsha’u tsha gzbug* ‘grandchild and the next generations of grandchild.’ The *New Tibetan Dictionary* also stated, “*gzbug* is *rjes ma* or *mjug ma*, ‘the next or last.’ (Bsam-gtan et al. 2006, p. 680)

Although Amdobas lost much affinitive kinship terminology; it is vital to explore common affinitive nomenclature in Amdo.

3.2 Affinity

3.2.1 Parents-in-Law

I have not found any common terms for father-in-law and mother-in-law during my fieldwork (2007-2012) in Amdo. In general, the husband and wife refer to their parents-in-law in the same way his or her spouse refers to them. A husband refers to his parents-in-law in the same way his wife refers to her parents. A wife refers to her parents-in-law in the same way her husband refers to his parents. Usually he or she just refers to them as *a-p(h)a* and *a-ma*. As I mentioned before, in some places they used *a-myes* for father-in-law and *a-ne* for mother-in-law. In some cases, they used *a-zhang* for father-in-law. There is no common or consistent term in the Amdo dialect for identifying one’s parents-in-law. We only know the majority of Amdobas used *a-p(h)a* and *a-ma* for their parents-in-law. According to Dpa’-ris Sangs-rgyas’s (2005) writing, in classical Tibetan, the wife uses *sgyug po* and *sgyug mo* for her father-in-law and mother-in-law and the husband uses *gyos po* and *gyos mo* for his father-in-law and mother-in-law (p. 63). The *New Tibetan Dictionary* also confirmed this conclusion (Bsam-gtan et al. 2006, pp. 19 and 171). Benedict (1942) observed that, “apparently used both by husband and wife are *gyos-po* ‘father-in-law,’ *sgyug-mo* ‘mother-in-law’” (p. 322). There is no evidence to confirm that Amdobas use these terms today.

3.2.2 Brothers and Sisters-in-Law

Amdobas do not have any specific term for identifying their brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, except for their older sisters-in-law. They normally add *a-khu*, *a-bo*, *a-rgya*, or *a-rga*, exactly the terms for an older brother, in front of the brother-in-law’s name, if he is the husband of one’s older sister. If he is one’s younger sister’s husband, he or she may just refer to his name without any other modifier. He or she only tells someone that he is his or her younger sister’s husband (*mag pa/ga*) if someone asks about the relationship. It

is also true other siblings even refer to her by her name if the sister-in-law is younger than they are. Therefore, local people use compound words such as one's brother's wife (*mna' ma*) or sister's husband (*mag pa/ga*) to identify their in-laws.

The problem is that many local people believe that how they use kinship terms depends on how a family teaches its children to use them. In some places, older siblings use *sru mo* for their younger sister-in-law. Normally younger siblings call their older brother's wife *sru mo* (people from nomadic areas) or *a-che-sru-mo/a-sru* (people from agricultural areas). In Dpa'ris County, people use *a-che/ce* for one's older brother's wife. It is important to note that *a-sru* also indicates woman in some agricultural areas. In classical Tibetan *sru* also has the meaning of married woman. For instance, *ma sru* and *ma sru mo*, "married women." However, classical written Tibetan has specific terms for husband's siblings and wife's siblings. For instance, *skud po* and *skud mo* respectively refer to wife's brothers and wife's sisters. Husband's brothers and husband's sisters are indicated by *snyid po* and *snyid mo*. As I discussed above, Dpa'-ris Sangs-rgyas (2005) claimed that *snyid mo* is father's sister and *snyid po* is her husband. He states that *khyos po* and *khyos mo* is the right term for husband's brother and sister (p. 63). But *The New Tibetan Dictionary* (2006) stated that *snyid po* and *snyid mo* can indicate husband's brother and sister or wife's brother and sister respectively (p. 282). Amdobas did not inherit these terms from their ancestors and school lessons (recently, a Tibetan language text of elementary school has included classical kinship terms), and they are suffering from shortage of kinship terms to indicate their in-laws.

Parents from both sides of a family use *mag pa* and *mna' ma* for their son-in-law and daughter-in-law. Elder members of the same family or other relations also use these two terms to classify their bridegrooms and brides. Benedict (1942) observed that, the terms *mak-pa* [*mag pa*] and *mna-ma* [*mna' ma*] are used with reference to the newly-married couple, hence the term can mean "bridegroom" and "bride" as well as "son-in-law" and "daughter-in-law" (p. 322). *Bag ma* is the specific term for bride and *bag po* is the specific term for bridegroom, but Amdobas generally use the former one during a wedding ceremony, and the latter one is not used in the Amdo dialect. They often prefer to use *mna' ma gsar ba* "new bride" instead of *bag ma* in daily life.

3.2.3 Husband and Wife

Then bridegroom can also be referred to as *mag pa gsar ba* "new *mag pa*." I have not found any specific term for bridegroom in Amdo so far. It is also difficult to explain the meaning and origin of *mag*. In Amdo, other villagers can use *mag pa* and *mna' ma* to describe the son-in-law and daughter-in-law of a family. The two phrases *De tshang gi magpa* and *de tshang gi mna'ma* mean the son-in-law of that family and the daughter-in-law of that family. They even use the two terms to indicate a young man's wife and a young woman's husband. For instance, *kho'I mna' ma* "his wife" and *mo'I mag pa* "her

husband.” Some Amdo Tibetans pronounce *mag pa* as *mag ga* or *mag bka* because Amdobas, especially nomads, often switch *pa* into *ga*. The best example is ‘*brog ga* for ‘*brog pa* “nomad.” *Mna’ ma* is a common term for all Tibetans, though we cannot easily figure out its original meaning. It is probably a derivative from *mn’a* “oath” as Benedict (1942) noted “one who takes an oath” (p. 322). A bride may have to swear her loyalty to her husband and give a child to her husband’s family. A wife uses *rgan po*, *skyes pa/sa*, or *mag pa* to refer to her husband in Amdo. Some men and women use the very coveted phrase *nged khi/kyi de* “that of mine” which refers to one’s spouse. Different groups of men use *bud med*, or woman, *rgan mo*, *chung ma*, *khyim pa*, *a-yi*, *mna’ ma* and *nag mo* for their wives respectively. As Dpa’-ris Sangs-rgyas argued:

Initially if a man’s wife is older than himself, he should refer to her in a respectful form as *a-yi*. But now people use it differently. In Blabrang people often say ‘there are *a-yi* and child at my home’ and *a-yi* refers to his wife whether she is older than or younger than him.” (Interview, October 2009)

Khyim pa at least has two meanings in the Tibetan language. The first one is often the term used by clergy to identify someone who stays at home or with the family. In some situations, this term refers to a wife who works at home or who deals with things at home. In classical written form *khyo ga/khyo bo* is husband and *chung ma* is wife. *Nag mo* means a married woman, and people from some areas of Amdo use this term for wife. However, we can conclude that in Amdo the terms for man such as *rgan po* and *skyes pa* can be used to refer to a husband as well. Similarly, terms for woman can also be used for wife.

3.3 Respectful Terms

In theory, a younger person should use respectful terms to refer to an elder. In recent years, Amdobas have used Tibetan respectful terms only for lamas and/or clergy members. They might have used the respectful terms for chief and headman in the past. There are fewer respectful terms used in Amdo. *Yab* “father” and *yum* “mother” are used only for a lama’s parents. Local people refer to a lama’s son as *sras* and daughter as *sras mo*. The wife of a lama²¹ was referred to as *rig ma* “wise woman”. In Amdo there is a particular way to refer to other kin of a lama by adding *sku-* “the body” in front of other common kinship terms. For instance, it is common to refer to *sku sring* “sister” and *sku tsha* “grandchild or nephew,” and so on. Amdobas use a combination of terms to describe kinship terms, and this shows the trend of declining kinship terms in Amdo. Today

²¹ For the purposes of this research, a lama is an incarnation of a Buddha. Lamas are not monks. Monks are never allowed to marry. Lamas are usually celibate. Under the Chinese Cultural Revolution, some lamas were forced to renounce their vows of celibacy, and some of them took wives. Some lamas from the 13th sect of Tibetan Buddhism also take wives, in the same way that some sects of Christianity allow their clergy to marry.

apparently many respectful terms are often used for religious purposes, including kinship terms in Amdo.

3.4 Adoption of Parents and Children

A stepfather occurs when a man who is married to someone's mother but is not their real father, a stepmother occurs when a woman is married to someone's father but is not the child's biological mother. In Amdo people often use *p(h)a (g)yar* and *ma (g)yar* to indicate the stepfather and mother. Some folks call a stepfather *ha yar*. The word *yar* should be *gyar* in classical written form, and it means to borrow or to loan. Dpa'-ris Sangs-rgyas (2005) argued that Tibetans also used *pha phyi ma* "succeeding father" for stepfather and *ma phyi ma* for stepmother (p. 63). Here, *phyi ma* means later or succeeding and it is opposite to *sngon ma*, former or ex-.

Adopted sons and daughters are referred to as *bu skal* and *bu skal ma* respectively. *Skal* means share, and this term shows that couples who do not have a child share a son or daughter from another couple. Dpa'-ris Sangs-rgyas (2005) suggested that *bu yar* is the correct term to indicate adopted son (p. 63). In order to stabilize the adoption, Amdobas often adopt a child when the child is very young, and the adopting parents do not have any information about the child's genetic parents. Tibetans do not adopt children who are grown, though many rich Chinese old people adopt young boys and girls for unknown reasons. Others assume that many young boys and girls become *gan er zi* 干儿子 "adopted son" and *gan nv er* 干女儿 "adopted daughter" for financial reasons or in order to follow recent popular Chinese custom. These two terms are actually are Chinese original words, and they do not have equivalent Tibetan terms.

This analysis has shown the ever-evolving characteristics of Tibetan kinship terms in Amdo. The study also demonstrates that it is erroneous to simply categorize kinship terms into two opposing binaries. Therefore, Barker (2003) argued that "[I]n particular its binary structure is itself a problem. The solution to the problem, then, is commonly to undo or deconstruct that binary itself, seeing it as a poor way to ask an investigative question" (p. 54).

4.0 Discussion

Kinship terms play significant cultural and social roles in Amdo, and the arbitrary use of these terms may confuse locals and non-locals alike. Local people speak a Tibetan dialect with standard or formalized kinship terms, and these are recorded in dictionaries. However, a language is as alive as the people who speak it, and the living generations of the region practice or use kinship terms in ways that are different from the formal versions (classical Tibetan). In comparing Tables 1 and 2, we can only find a few kinship terms that share similar meanings, although modifiers may affect the meaning of the

kinship terms. The word for mother, *ma* or *a-ma*, and for sister, *che/ce* or *a-che/ce* are the only consistent terms used among the Amdobas and other Tibetans. In most cases, *a-p(h)a* is a popular and universal term in all regions of Tibet. In all other words we see different terms used for identifying the relationships of kin. Some kinship terms have similar roots but actually refer to completely different kin. For instance, with the term *sru*, Benedict (1942) assumed that this referred to a mother's sister, but, in the Amdo context, it often refers to an elder sister-in-law or to a woman in general. Benedict also mentioned that *a-sru* means a woman in western or central Tibet, but he did not point out that it can also mean sister-in-law, which is its principal interpretation in Amdo.

One prominent finding was that a single object or signifier can easily have two or more meanings, even within a very similar cultural context. For example, we cannot find the kinship term *a-yi* in a Tibetan dictionary. The only record of the term is when scholars have used it while editing colloquial language textbooks for non-Tibetans. Scholars have assumed that the term *a-yi* indicates grandmother in Amdo. However, data from this research has shown that many local people use this term to refer to their wives or to women in general. Another example of this phenomenon is that some villages in Amdo use *a-p(h)a* when referring to an older brother. It is usually the case that *a-p(h)a* refers to father. As Barker and Galasinski (2001) pointed out "[...] language as a tool is to suggest that we do things with languages so that, in the context of social usage, meanings can be temporarily stabilized for practical purposes" (p. 3). We can find that this hypothesis is compatible with the characteristics of kinship terminology.

The relationship between objects and meanings is an exact match of one to one, but is through language that objects are given meanings. We only can find the truth within the description used by language but not beyond the language. Hence, there only exists different individuals in a social context who have their own roles and relationships to us, but we can only identify them by using language. This language banner is temporary and unstable. In particular, people may have more opportunities to choose different labels for their kin beyond the written language. The object father is out there, but people may not have a consistent language term to name it. We first have an object, and then we describe it in a language according to its trait or appearance and/or social discourse. Discourse plays a significant role in kinship terms (we learn to listen and speak before we learn to read or write), and we need to focus our studies on speech rather than on writing when we analyze kinship terms in Amdo. This is even more important in a region such as Amdo where many people are illiterate and use oral kinship terms without knowing the written form of the terms. Barker (2003) also pointed out that:

Following Derrida, Laclau, and Mouffe take meaning to be inherently unstable. That is, difference – 'difference and deferred' – whereby the production of meaning is continually deferred and added to (or supplemented) by the meaning of other words. (p. 410)

Therefore, this supports the conclusion that how Amdobas use these terms in daily life is more important than the written forms of the terms.

Oral language not only challenges word formation, but it also creates problems in correctly recognizing the sound of a word. For instance, Tibetan scholars have not reached an agreement about how to analyze *zha yi* “kids” as well as *zhi lu* “son or boy” and *zhi mo* “daughter or girl.” My assumption regarding the origin of these terms is that *zha yi* is the word *byis* of Tibetan term *byis pa* “child” separated into two words or sounds. The root letter of this term is *ba*, and it combines with its subjoined letter *ya* to produce sound *sha* in the Amdo dialect, which is the exact sound of Tibetan consonant *zha*. As Sung Kuoming and Lha-byams-rgyal (2005) confirmed, “... all three labial consonants *pa*, *pha*, *ba* are merged to one sound [sha], the same as *zha*, when taking *ya-btags* [‘subjoined letters’]” (p. 21). The *yi* is a combination of subjoined letter *ya* and vowel *i*. This assumption is applicable for other terms like as *a-yi*, *zhi lu* and *zhi mo*, etc. In Amdo, Tibetans have developed inconsistent kinship terms, and these terms lead to difficulty in communication among neighbors. As Sung Kuoming and Lha-byams-rgyal suggested, “[I]n the vast Amdo region, the family or kinship terms are far from unified. Students (as well as native Amdo speakers) may need to learn different terms when visiting different places” (p. 110).

My own experience also demonstrates how these kinship terms create confusion for local people. As a young boy growing up in Amdo, I was shocked when classmates from a neighboring county used *a-p(h)a-che* (great or elder brother) or *a-p(h)a-chung* (second older brother) to describe their brothers. My first reaction was to wonder how a person could have two or more *a-p(h)a* (fathers), when my classmates were actually describing their brothers. Then I came to understand that they choose different signs or words to refer to their brothers with *a-p(h)a*, although most Tibetans use *a-p(h)a* to refer to their fathers. Now the question is how this group of people decided to use *a-p(h)a* for brother rather than for father. When did they start to use this term to describe their brothers? How does the term for brother, *a-rgya*, shift into a term for father in certain community in Amdo? It is not possible to fully answer these questions without further research. The answers for these questions may bring a new understanding of cultural change.

As usage grows, common understanding grows, and the language evolves in this cyclical relationship of meaning and usage. We can argue that Tibetan kinship terms demonstrate that instability is characteristic of signs or signifiers in a cultural context. Thus, we cannot assume that their meanings are fixed at one point in time, even in a similar culture. Variations of meanings are possible even in the same culture. What we can conclude is that people (individually and collectively) will create new meanings for a word or object based on their own experiences and intentions. A government’s policy or action also profoundly and directly affects kinship terminology today. For instance, the One-Child Policy of the People’s Republic of China will abolish kinship terms such as uncle and aunt, and other related terms in China, although China has one of the most

diverse ranges of kinship terms in the world. This policy may also gradually influence Tibetan kinship terms in the future. Kinship terms are a symbolic cultural system, a system that is formed by language habits. As Fox (2003) summed up McLennan's argument by stating that "[kinship] terminology did not in any case have anything to do with biological relationship but was merely a 'code of courtesies' showing degrees of respect" (p.19). For Amdobas, it is more important that one shows respect for one's father than it is to use the correct respectful term, *a-p(h)a* or *a-rgya* to address and refer a father, but it is very significant to show respect.

CHAPTER 4

MARRIAGE AND WEDDING RITUALS IN AMDO

1.0 Introduction

The subject of kinship and marriage has dominated anthropological thinking and research for many decades. Only a few scholars have conducted research on marriage customs in Tibet because the Chinese government has not allowed western researchers into Tibet for various reasons. Some researchers (Goldstein, 1971; Levine, 1994) have conducted fieldwork in Tibet and reported that they were fascinated by the practice of polyandry.

Polyandry and polygamy have interested western researchers for many years (Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, 1963; Aziz, 1978; Stein, 1982; Miller, 1987; Nakane, 1992; and Fox, 2003). Other researchers (Benedict, 1941; Levi-Strauss, 1969 [1949]) have studied matrilineal cross-cousin marriage in Tibet through reading and analyzing the travel notes of missionaries and travelers as well as Tibetan historical records. While western scholars may gain great insight into the marriage and kinship systems in Tibet from analyzing secondary sources, the lack of information from primary sources limits the extent and depth of that insight. A study of the Tibetan marriage system is very limited if it only examines polyandry and cross-cousin marriage.

Levi-Strauss (1969 [1949]) expressed doubt about Benedict's explanation of shifting Tibetan kinship terms for the mother's brother into the father's brother. He wrote, "This explanation is possible. It is not entirely satisfactory, but we would have to be better informed on Tibetan rules of marriage than we are if we were to start debating the point" (p.371). Benedict (1941) also wrote that, "[M]ost writers on Tibet fail to discuss marriage regulations" (p. 329). These two statements show that western scholars have had difficulty analyzing the Tibetan kinship system because the lack of materials on Tibetan marriage rules and because the lack of access to Tibet has prevented them from making concrete conclusions. Today western scholars still cannot freely conduct fieldwork in Tibet, and it is difficult for them to produce good definitive research on the nuances of Tibetan marriage practices.

Many researchers focus on the economic development of Tibet because the modernization of Tibet has become a hot topic. A few Western researchers have been able to study Tibetan culture in some areas of Amdo and Kham from the 1990s to present (2012), but they have been more interested in religion, arts, and the economy than they have been in Tibetan marriage traditions. In my opinion, it is important to study Tibetan marriage traditions in Amdo even though it might not present a complete picture of Tibetan marriage traditions. As a native Amdoba, it is easier for me to understand what

about Tibetan marriage customs has changed since the Chinese Cultural Revolution and what has remained the same.

Tibetans themselves have been active in preserving and promoting Tibet's unique culture since the end of the 1980s. Some books and articles about marriage in Amdo have been written in English by young Tibetans who have coauthored them with their western gurus (Skal- bzang-nor-bu and Kevin Stuart, 1996; 'Brug-mo-skyid et al, 2010). These materials focus on the wedding ceremonies and marriage customs of a single village. Other Tibetan writers produced books and articles about different aspects of Tibetan marriage in either Tibetan or Chinese. Those materials also tend to focus on the traditions and customs of a single tribe or village in Tibet. In short, it is difficult to find a book or article in any language that provides a comprehensive analysis of marriage customs in Amdo.

Many local Tibetan writers, video and film producers, and researchers are not professionals in the field of cultural studies, art, or anthropology. Their works are simple, descriptive, and rife with political rhetoric. Although those works are informative on the customs of a local village or tribe, they are of little research value.

Local governments and people also try to promote Tibetan culture in different ways and forms. They encourage people to perform traditional dances in public (including in many Chinese cities). They record traditions and rituals with the help of technology, and they write books about traditional culture and customs. Many people claim that the goal of creating these books and videos is to promote and preserve Tibetan culture. Some productions also mislead readers and audiences. For example, I carefully watched three DVDs²² about the marriage customs among three different Tibetan nomadic tribes in Amdo. All three "documentaries" (They are not true documentaries because the scenes were staged with local actors) presented the complete wedding ceremonies of those three tribes in detail. They also show that a Tibetan marriage begins with a bride kidnapping, which is an old custom, and that Tibetans have given up the tradition of requesting a bridewealth or brideprice because of the new Chinese marriage law. My research shows that some Tibetans still practice bride kidnapping for special reasons, but not all marriages begin with this tradition. Many Tibetans also continue to practice paying a brideprice in arranged marriages. In fact, the brideprice is higher today than it has been in the past.

²² 1) *Bong stag gnyen ston dar skud ring mo* (Wedding ceremony in Bongstag). Kun-grub-rgyal (director). Produced by *Them chen rdzong mi dmangs srid gzhung* (The People's Government of Themchen County).

2) *Gnyen ston bkra shis gyang 'khyil* (Auspicious wedding ceremony). Rig-legs (director). Produce by *Nub mtsho mi rigs sgra brnyan par skrun khang* (Xihai Nationalities Audiovisual Press).

3) *Gnyen ston bsam pa'I don 'grub* (Wishful wedding ceremony). Bde-mchog-rgyal (director). Produced by *Mtsho sngon brnyan 'phrin khang* (Mtsho sngon Television).

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss Tibetan marriage customs in Amdo. My research was conducted in accordance with the anthropological theory of “descent,” “alliance” and “reciprocity.”

Regardless of the culture one is studying, most research on marriage customs focuses on family and kinship groups. As Fox (2003) pointed out:

Before Levi-Strauss, marriage has been discussed largely in the context of recruitment to kinship groups; legitimate marriage was necessary to provide for legitimate offspring to replenish the group. Levi-Strauss turned this on its head. Kinship groups, he argued, were simply units in a system of “alliance” made or “expressed” by marriage. The real differences between kinship systems, then, lay in the different ways in which they moved women around the system in marriage. (p. 23)

I will discuss marriage customs in Amdo using these theories and different materials objectively and critically. My own experience of marriage in Amdo is also a treasure trove of assets for my research because I myself have participated in many wedding rituals in Amdo since I was young. Although I read some classical books and articles about “alliance” and “descent,” and I am familiar with Tibetan marriage, I still have found it difficult to understand it completely. It is my intention in this chapter to describe the process of the marriage arrangement rather than the wedding ceremony as it exists in Amdo today.

All kinship groups need marriage in order to continue their lines through the norms of descendants or alliances. My research generally and indirectly shows that Amdobas are more concerned about descent than about alliances. Their traditional norms emphasize “cognatic ties” (Tibetan: *sha nye*) more than “affinal (in-law) ties” (Tibetan: *sho nye*). One Tibetan villager, Dbang-Rgyal, 63, from Bayan, was unsatisfied and argued when I asked about his son and his daughter-in-law, saying, “He is very nice to his wife’s family though I gave him everything. Nowadays all young men have the same problem; they only care about their wives’ families” (Interview, December 2007).

Many questions come to mind when we try to write about alliance. This chapter cannot cover all aspects of marriage, but it tries to find answers to these questions: What does marriage mean to Tibetans in Amdo? What are the unique elements of Tibetan marriage in Amdo? Who marries whom in Amdo? Do Tibetans exchange women among the same groups or among different groups? Who has the power to make decisions about alliances? Who can be the heir, the man or woman, or both? How do Tibetans negotiate marriage? Do Tibetans take or buy wives? Do the nomads and peasants abide by the same norms of marriage? What are the important rituals of the wedding ceremony?

At the core of these questions is how Tibetans in Amdo continue a family or group. The life cycle of birth, mating, and death are related to marriage and its rules. People create families through marriage, though we do not know exactly when the marriage tradition was created in the world. Marriage guarantees that families or groups continue, and families constitute a critical component of any community or society. Marriage also

produces descendants for a kinship group and creates alliances with other groups through the exchange of women. Usually, a man takes a wife from another group after he pays a brideprice to build a family and produces descendants for his group.

2.0 The System of Matrimony

The family is the smallest and most basic social unit of any society. It is a universal social institution or organization of kinship systems, though there are different types of families. A family is built through alliance or marriage. Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark (1963) attempted to redefine marriage when he analyzed polyandry. His definition of marriage is:

[T]he union between man and woman in the form recognized by their society entitling them individually to the specific kinship status of husband and wife, jointly to that of spouses with reciprocal rights and obligations, and to the procreation of legitimate children within the union. (p. 23)

For Tibetans, marriage is not only a personal issue, but it also affects the condition of a group. Amdobas claim that the purpose of a marriage is to build a home in order to produce children, who will perpetuate the lineage (mostly patrilineage), inherit property (including land), inherit status from a male (most cases a father; in a few cases grandfather or uncle; sometimes even a female) and have obligations to care for parents when they are elderly. As ‘Brug mo skyid et al. (2010) described it:

Marriage is considered vital because it continues a family’s line of descent and allows the family’s protective deity to continue receiving sacrifices. [...] a final reason to marry is to have children who will care for the parents when they are old. (p. 172)

Similarly, Gkon-mchog-chos-‘phel from Rdobis Township stated that:

The purpose of marriage is to care for old people. Many social tasks cannot be done by a single man, and the man needs a female partner to help him deal with many other tasks in his life. If a man does not have a wife, it is like a bird that only has one wing and cannot fly. He also needs a child or children to continue his lineage. (Interview, October 2010)

Generally, Amdobas recognize all cognates as “kin,” and they are related by birth, though some places practice cross-cousin marriage and emphasize patrilineage. In Amdo, boys are often chosen to be heirs, and they have to take wives into their parents’ homes to build families for serving their duties and exercising their rights. If a female becomes the heir of a family, then her husband has to stay in her parents’ home. In Dpa’ris, a girl cannot be an heir, and a family without a boy has to adopt a boy as a son who then has to marry one of the girls in the family in order to become an heir. In the past and in the present day, monogamy has been the dominant type of marriage among Amdobas.

In every society, a family unit is composed of a husband, a wife, and their immature children. The common marriage system in the world is monogamy in which a husband

only has one wife or a wife has one husband. Grunlan and Mayers (1988) explained that “Monogamy refers to a family in which each person has only one mate, that is, the marriage unit consists of a husband and wife” (p.152). Monogamy is the most common marriage pattern among peasants and nomads in Amdo. Without a doubt, cases of polyandry can be found in some Tibetan villages and tribes in Amdo. Polyandry is common in the Khams-Amdo border Tibetan villages of Zungchu County in Rngaba. Other Tibetan tribes (Dngulrwa, Chukhama, Chokho) in Rmachu County, Kanlho and Mgolog used to practice polyandry, although not widely.

2.1 Polygamy and Polyandry

Polyandry and polygamy in Tibet are the subjects of much discussion in China and in the West. These scholars declare that Tibet is a rare place where people have practiced polyandry for many centuries. Polyandry refers to the marriage of a woman to more than one husband, and, in the Tibetan case, brothers often share one wife. The oldest brother takes a wife, and the other brothers automatically become her husbands. It is true that in some Tibetan areas, especially in some areas of central Tibet and Khams, the older brother takes a wife, and other brothers in the family also become her husbands.

Grunlan and Mayers (1988) explained that, “[P]olygamy refers to a family where there are multiple mates” (p.152). There are two forms of polygamy: polygyny and polyandry. Barbara Aziz conducted her research among Tibetans who live in the Tibet-Nepal border areas, and the result of her research shows that Tibetans in that region not only practice polygamous and polyandrous marriages such as brothers sharing a wife or sisters sharing a husband, but also practice several other kinds of polygamous and polyandrous marriages. Aziz (1978) found phenomena such as a father and son sharing a wife, unrelated males sharing a wife, unrelated females sharing a husband, and a mother and daughter sharing a husband (pp. 139-143).

Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark (1963) did an extensive analysis of polyandry among Tibetans of the Central Tibet, Khams, and Ladak in his remarkable book *A Study of Polyandry*. He also wrote:

It is to be noted that all my informants assured me that there was no polyandry to be found in the northeastern province of Amdo (Chinese Tsing-hai)[Qinghai], possibly as a result of Chinese active repression of the custom there over the ages. (p. 506)

My observations and interviews confirm that polyandry is not commonly practiced by Amdobas in the past or in the present day though some Tibetans in Khams-Amdo border areas practice polyandry widely. We have to keep in mind that neither of these types of families has a marriage contract that states a woman is married to all the brothers in a family or a man is married to all the sisters in a family. The wedding ceremony is only arranged for one man (usually the oldest brother) and one woman. The oldest brother is

the one who is married to the woman, and all of the younger brothers can have sexual relations with her. Any children born of those relations consider the oldest brother to be their father, while the other brothers are considered to be uncles. Amdobas do not have a corresponding word for polyandry and they often describe it as brothers who have a common wife or woman (in Amdo dialect the term *A-yis* means both wife and woman). Some people use a metaphor “two people are riding one horse at the same time” (Tibetan: *phongs res*) and it means they have a three-some or *cicisbeism*. This metaphor emphasizes sexual life rather than the marriage. In Zungchu, local Tibetan dialect labels fraternal polyandry as *spun cha 'dug* (brothers live to gather with one wife) or *bu spun mna' ma sgang len* (brothers take one wife) although it is difficult to prove the meaning of *sgang* (a local woman, Dge-'dun-'tsho, spells it as *sgang*) and its written form in classical Tibetan.

A Chinese researcher, Jin Jing 金晶 undertook her fieldwork in this region and pointed out that polygamy was not the main type of marriage in Gannan [Kamlho] in historically, but it is true that it existed in the past in this region (2008, p. 162). She also claimed that she did not find any cases of polygamy during her fieldwork in this region, and her respondents told her that there were cases of polygamy, but none of the respondents heard about any cases of polygamy in this region (2008, p.167). Some Tibetans in Amdo still practice polygamy and polyandry, though many Amdobas have not even heard of polyandry.

Ngag-dbang-tshe-ring-bkra-zhis, a Tibetan scholar, from Krang'dzi Tshoba, Skyangsmad Sdeba (Chinese: 传子沟村; pinyin: Zhuanzigou Cun), Gtsotshang Town (Chinese: 川主寺镇; pinyin: Chuanzhusi Zheng), Zungchu County (Chinese: 松潘县; pinyin: Songpan Xian) in Rngaba, noted:

Our village [Skyangsmad Village] has 50 households, and I know only three cases of polyandry. My *tshoba* [Krang'dzi] has 12 households and there are no polyandry cases. However, people under 40 years old do not practice polyandry anymore. (Interview, August 2012)

Ngag-dbang-tshe-ring-bkra-zhis is from the Sharkhog area where polyandry has been practiced widely, and it seems the polyandry practice has declined in the last 40 years. It is certain that the modern education and frequent cultural interaction influence young generations, and they try to learn from other cultures and seek love for marriage. Sgrol-ma-thar, a student from Zungchu County, observed that Tibetans in upper Zungchu practice polyandry widely, and only a few families in lower Zungchu practice polyandry. She noted that workers and students do not willingly practice polyandry (Interview, June 2012). Interestingly, two Tibetan scholars 'Bum-skyabs and Thogs-med, who are from Zungchu County, stated that no family in Zungchu practices polyandry and they even told me my questions about polyandry were naïve (Interview, August 2012). Another Tibetan female scholar, Dge-'dun-'tsho, who was born and raised in Zungchu and whose husband's brothers share a common wife, informed me that Tibetans still practice

polyandry widely in the Ljanglelha district (Chinese: 章腊区; pinyin: Zhangla Qu) Sharkhog areas of Zungchu, and her husband is from this region. She is familiar with the marriage customs in this region and knows the local situation. She observed:

The special production system 'semi-nomad and semi-farmer' requires brothers to share a common wife in order to manage needed labor forces. One brother stays at home to take care of the farm and domestic works with the wife, while another brother grazes livestock on remote pastoral areas and he may do returns home once a month or even less often. The third brother may do business in other locations and he only returns home randomly. Every year they change their duties, and each of them has responsibilities for caring for the wife. [...] However, only one brother (normally the oldest brother) has a wedding ceremony with the wife, and all children refer him as father though he may not be the genetic father. Other brothers address her using her name directly at home, but in public they refer her as sister-in-law or *sru mo*. It seems that locals still prefer brothers to share a common wife in order to generate more labor and keep the property in the family. The bride's family often requests all brothers to share a common wife when the groom's family proposes a marriage. [...] Recently two of my sister-in-laws' sons got married and the brothers share a common wife. [...] But official workers are exceptions today and they do not need to share a common wife with their brothers. (Interview, October 2012)

Education certainly disrupts marriage customs dramatically, and it ended some cases of polyandry marriage, but not all. A friend of my brother, Ljang-bu, is from Rmachu and he used to share a common wife with his nomad brother told Ljang-bu that his family arranged their marriage though he went to school and got a job later in a town. He finally took another wife from different region and his brother stayed with their former wife (Interview, August 2012)

There are two other cases of polyandry in Rmachu County observed by one of my interviewees, Ye-shis-sgröl-ma, 38, who is a native of Rmachu. The first case is that three brothers (The two older brothers are government workers, and the younger brother is deceased) from Chukhama Township share a common wife who is a local nomad woman. They currently all live under one roof. This case was also observed by a Tibetan scholar, Dpa'-ris Sangs-rgyas, from Kanlho when he was a local official in Rmachu County. He observed:

I do not think many Amdobas practice polyandry. I only found one polyandry case in a Tibetan community in Gannan 甘南[Kanlho] Prefecture. I noticed that two brothers shared a wife. I think this is a special case. Generally, Amdobas do not have this tradition, and I cannot find other cases. (Interview, December 2009)

The second case is of two brothers from Dngulrwa Gongma Township who share a common wife. One brother is a nomad, and the other brother has an official job. The younger brother took the wife in 1993, and the older brother was in high school at that time. Later their father made a special decision and asked the two brothers to share the wife. The older brother wanted to separate from this marriage after their father died, but neither his brother nor their common wife approved of this option. The younger brother threatened him that if he left the family he would become homeless. The wife threatened

suicide. So, they continue to live in the polyandrous marriage even though one of the parties does not want to. (Interview, July 2012)

A male herder, Skar-kho, 60 years old, from Gadskeya Dadui (大队)²³ said:

Some brothers still share a common wife and/or some men have two wives in our region. A man has two wives in the same tent or in different tents. I know several cases of this kind of marriage. Also, I know that two brothers can make an agreement to share one wife. In my village, there is a case of three brothers sharing one wife. Usually, rich families practice either polygyny or polyandry because of economic reasons. Of course, sometimes, the marriage will break up, and the brothers take other wives. (Interview, August 2010)

My research data shows that the practice of polyandry does not seem to be limited by class, occupation, or political role. Polyandry is practiced by poor and wealthy families, farmers and herders, and even by official workers in Amdo. The question we must ask is why do they practice polyandry? Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark (1963) summarized the reasons suggested by researchers:

Authors in the past have sought various explanations for polyandry. These are of different kinds: Historical, demographic, sociological, economic and also personal, that is to say, in accordance with the feelings and desires of the individuals concerned. (pp. 552-553)

My interviewees gave me two primary reasons for practicing polyandry in Amdo: economic and sociological. They claim that a family does not want to divide property (land and/or livestock) into small parts and so require the male children to take a common wife. The sociological reason is that Tibetan society is patriarchal. And fathers arrange marriages for their sons. Another sociological issue is to unify brothers and not destroy the solidarity because of marriage. As Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin, a Tibetan scholar pointed out, "Brothers sharing a common woman helps them to keep their property within a family and unify the minds of the brothers" (Interview, August 2012). Similarly, a Tibetan lama, A-lags Dbyig-kya', stated that, "If brothers share a wife, and the woman is skillful, she coordinates all the brothers well and builds a prosperous family. She also earns a good reputation in the community" (Interview, July 2012). It seems that maintaining the unity of the brothers and keeping the property in the family is the goal of polyandry. In contrast, polygyny may require a wealthy man to divide his property among several wives.

It is true that rich men or local chiefs used to practice polygyny, and many men secretly continue to practice it today. Polygyny refers to a man having multiple wives at the same time. In many cases, two sisters share one husband, but they all do not live under one roof. This system does not exist publicly today in Amdo because of the marriage law and public criticism, but it is said that a few people still practice it secretly.

²³ *Dadui* is the smallest current Chinese administration in pastoral areas and it is similar to village level administration in agricultural areas. Gadskeya Dadui is located in Chukhama Smadma Township of Rmachu County, Kanlho TAP, Gansu Province.

As Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark (1963) observed, “Lovers and mistresses are also a common feature of Tibetan love life, just as polygyny and conjoint-marriage are, too” (p. 506). Many of my interviewees assume that a husband or man usually takes care of two sisters at the same time because of economic reasons.

Men do not officially accept the practice of polygyny, though many men may think it is desirable and expensive. Some rumors indicate that there is a situation of a man taking care of both a mother and her daughter (former husband’s daughter), but he is only married to one of them. This may only happen to *kher ‘dug ma* or a single woman living with her daughter, and they do not have good social connections or family support. It is very rare but another form of this informal polygyny is more popular. I was told that in many places rich men often take care of two sisters though officially he took one of them as his wife. Therefore, it is crucial to distinguish between a man’s wife and his mate or lover, between normal cases and abnormal cases. Without a doubt, in the past a chieftain or local ruler might have the power and resources to maintain more than one wife or mate. In this case, a man takes second wife if his first wife fails to produce a child. Today rich businessmen replace old chieftains, and many of them do maintain more than one partner in different places.

Polygyny was practiced in Tibet, including in Amdo. There are social and economic bases for this type of marriage system. A Chinese professor, Ma Rong, (2008) observed:

[I]t is clear that monogamous marriages dominate in urban areas, while there are polygynous and polyandrous marriages in rural areas in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). The other two types of marriage have existed in Tibet for centuries, and still have some influences among Tibetan people. [...] If young university students in the late 1980s believe the advantage of these two marriage types, there must be a rationale for these marriage types under the current economic and social conditions. These types therefore are still accepted and practiced by some residents, and probably will last for a period of time in Tibet. (p. 219)

Monogamy is the most visible and dominant marriage pattern in Amdo. However, the nuclear family, as it is practiced in the West is not the most popular family organization among farmers and nomads in Amdo. It seems that the extended family is an ideal type of family traditionally because a self-sufficient economy requires more labor, but not necessarily more professional labor.

For Tibetans, the basic functions of a family are to organize production and create the next generations of new laborers. This goal is primary for both nomads and farmers. For this reason, Tibetans often ask questions such as “Are you married?” and “Do you have children?” whenever they meet their distant relatives and even strangers. It is clear that reproducing posterity is the main goal of marriage, and a family cannot continue without the next generation. A family is also a unit of solidarity and political power. One man’s alliance also brings him supremacy or inferiority because the network and power of his wife’s relatives influence his future. In the past, and today, and in many parts of the world, a person’s future is not only determined by his or her birth, but also by his or her

alliances. Thus, people assumed that a lucky person was born to a powerful or rich family and another lucky person has made a good alliance. Tibetans in Amdo also feel this way, though their religious beliefs discourage attachment to worldly desires. It is obvious that one cannot choose his or her family, but one does have the right to build his or her own family in any way he or she wishes in order to pursue a better future.

2.2 Cousin Marriage

Marriages between consanguineously related kin are quite common around the world. Ma Rong (2008) claimed that, “Han Chinese would delight to have marriages between cousins” (p. 204). Tibetans do not marry close relatives, and it is taboo to have sex with relatives. As Ma Rong (2008) mentioned this about the marriage taboo among relatives in Tibet, “Marriage was prohibited between descendants of paternal and maternal lines within six generations” (p. 220). In reality, two people can get married if they are three generations apart among sedentary inhabitants. This is also in accordance with the Chinese marriage law. One exception to this is that villagers from agricultural areas where peasants who have interacted with Han Chinese or other ethnic groups for centuries can get married with relatives from the mother’s side. For instance, one can marry his mother’s sister’s daughter or his mother’s brother’s daughter. That means some tribes or villages in Amdo practice parallel and cross-cousin marriage. Usually, anthropologists assume that cross-cousin marriage is more common than parallel-cousin marriage is around the world. In Rebgong, I even discovered one case of practicing parallel-cousin marriage because I found that a man was married to his father’s brother’s daughter.²⁴ This man is educated at a college, and he has a good job in a town. The man’s father and woman’s father arranged the marriage. We have to treat this as special case, and it is hard to find another similar case in Amdo. The subject’s father noted:

This is not normal marriage, my brother has diabetes, and he insisted my son get married with his daughter because he thought that his son-in-law or nephew will take care of him as a sick man. In my village, there are four or five close cousin marriages, but they are all related to special situations. This kind of marriage is not normal in our village, but sometimes people do not have choices.” (Interview, September 2011)

Cross-cousin marriages happen when the children of a brother and sister marry. This pattern occurs because of practicing lineage endogamy. Parallel-cousin marriage occurs when the children of two same sex siblings marry. The marriage of the sisters’ children is popular in some agricultural villages because villagers ignore the blood ties of the mother’s side, though Tibet is a bilateral society in general.

²⁴ Ego has married with his father’s brother’s daughter or son. I found only one case in Rebgong during my fieldwork trips between 2007 and 2012.

There are several reasons for practicing cross-cousin or parallel-cousin marriage in Amdo. The first reason is because of conflict. Some families to seek spouses from close relatives. For instance, a family was marginalized in a village in Gcantssha County in Qinghai, and other families in this village and in the neighbor villages did not intend to make an affinity relationship with this family. Basically, Family A had a fight with Family B, which had a good reputation, and many close relatives in the village. They did not solve their conflict for several years, and they became enemies. Other families have also supported their friend's family and decided to avoid contact with Family A. Therefore, Family A's son could not find a wife from his own village and other villages because his family had a bad reputation among others nearby (Tibetan: *De ba tshang nga bshad rgyu mang gi*) (there are a lot of rumors about that family). The mother in Family A negotiated with her sister to give her daughter to the son of Family A. In this case, a kind of parallel-cousin marriage occurred because of the family conflict. One of my informants confirmed that he knew one man who even got married to his aunt's or his mother's younger sister. He told me that this family did not have a good relationship with neighbors and was not a wealthy family. (Interview, Rig-'dzin, December 2008) Therefore, this family could not find a bride from any other family except Ego's mother's family. Another family conflict forced a man to get married with his wife's younger sister after he divorced his first wife, who is his current wife's old sister. The families preferred to arrange these close relative marriages rather than risk a love interaction.

A family may continue this marriage system until one of the next generations earns a good reputation or until someone becomes a powerful person in the same village or in another village.

The second purpose for this type of marriage is to produce an heir. A father's sister may ask her brother to give his son away to her daughter to become an heir to her property if she is a widow and does not have a son. This is one way to keep property in the same lineage. The mother-in-law does not want an outsider to inherit her family's property and name. It is said that in Dpa'ris County there were a few cases of this even among nomadic families. Nomadic people usually do not have the tradition of marrying close relatives. I assume that this region is surrounded by a huge number of Han Chinese, and that their influence has affected the Tibetan nomads' lives. Traditionally, Han Chinese believe that the relatives on the mother's side are not as important, and that a man can find a wife from this side.

The third reason is economic. The economic reason for close relative marriage is to reduce bride-wealth or groom-wealth for poor families. They exchange brides and grooms among relatives, and it is much easier to arrange a marriage in the same clan or group.

The fourth reason is the need to ensure that the parents-in-law are taken care of in their old age. Recently young people have already broadened their views and have learned many things from television programs and movies, even though many Tibetan

villagers are unable to understand Chinese (Mandarin), the dominant media language in Tibetan areas in China. Television or radio programs and movies in Tibetan Amdo dialect are also available if one has a television and the necessary equipment. The information from media influences the view of young people radically. Today many Tibetan women do not marry men who have older parents and young siblings. Traditionally, Tibetans believe that a family with living parents and many siblings is a symbol of a good family or a lucky family. Young women also wish to join such a happy or warm family. Today, young people think old parents and young siblings are burdens for the newly married couple. Some old parents begin to worry about their own futures and about the in-laws' future attitude. The in-law may not take care of them and may treat them badly. The old parents try to avoid a future tragedy and request their sons and daughters to get married with the mother's sister, father's sister, mother's brother, or even the father's brother's children. Even though most Tibetans understand the genetic consequences of marrying family members who are too close, they argue that it is difficult to trust other people, and they do not want to take any risk because they are old. However, they believe that the blood is thicker than water and that a blood tie plus alliance is more concrete.

These cross-cousin or parallel-cousin married couples are criticized and discriminated against by other young people and their friends, but they do not have enough power to reject their parents' arrangements. Chinese marriage law also explicitly states that people can only get married if they are at least three generations removed. However, Tibetans still practice cross-cousin or parallel-cousin marriage for social and economic reasons. The reasons for cousin marriage in Grotshang summarized by So-ba Sprang-thar-rgya-mtsho (2009) are as follows: a) influence from Chinese culture; b) it is easy to investigate a bride's or bridegroom's background such as *sha rus rgyud* or bone lineage and the family history of an affiance; c) and two close families can solve a marriage problem if that happens in the future. (p. 3) However, cousin marriage does not indicate that there is free sexual access among cousins. In reality, all Tibetans who practice cousin marriage in Amdo are aware of the incest taboo and they avoid having sex with members of their primary kin. Only the power of the parents' decision destroys the incest taboo and forces cousins to marry each other. Most Tibetans in Amdo practice group exogamy and racial endogamy (Skal Bzang Nor Bu and Stuart, 1996; Hermanns, 1959). There are regional variations and certain circumstances affect marriage practice in Amdo.

3.0 Types of Families

There are several patterns of family in Amdo, and every pattern is related to who lives with whom and where they live. The first pattern of family exists in Amdo is the single family (here I use the term family because of Tibetan term *tshang*, which means family or home), which refers to a person who lives alone with or without children and who does

not have a mate. Amdo Tibetans do not recognize this as a family, and they call this pattern “bachelor” or “single parents family” (Tibetan: *mi rkyang tshang* or *kher ‘dug tshang*). This kind of family was and is very rare in Amdo though it has existed throughout the world for a long time. In the past, this kind of person was considered to be a robber, a beggar, or a woman who cannot find a husband for many reasons. Without parents, a single man often relies on his sister’s family. A single woman often relies on her brother’s family rather than her sister’s family in order to avoid her brother-in-law’s sexual attention. Otherwise, it is difficult to survive within a traditional subsistence economic system. Normally men do much better living alone than women do in Tibet. There are very few women living alone in Tibet. There are many cases where some women live with only their children, but most women do not live alone.

The second type of family is the nuclear family, and this is considered to be the ideal type of family in the West. Usually the parents and their immature children live together under one roof. One of the children is designated to look after the parents once he or she is grown, though today many grownup children make agreements to take care of their parents separately. For instance, the daughter takes care of her father in her family’s home, and the son takes care of the mother in his family’s home. Tibetans often live in an extended family, which is the third form of family where three generations live under one roof. The three generations are grandparents, parents, and grandchildren. In villages, this type of family is ideal, and all the family members help each other. As Eriksen observed, “They often need the labour power of the children for their fields or herds; and children can also form the basis of political support or be seen as an old age insurance policy” (p.95). In urban areas, it often becomes difficult for the family to earn enough money to support the older family members. So, many older people live in villages where the cost of living is lower. There, they focus on overcoming their poverty and preparing for the next life through daily prayers and temple activities such as walking a circle around a stupa and turning *Mani* wheels.

An extended family is two or more related nuclear families sharing a household, and there are vertical and horizontal extended families in Amdo. The vertical extended family was discussed above, and it is the main form of extended family in Amdo. Amdoba families that have many children practice this horizontal arrangement. In a horizontal arrangement, two families of the same generation live together with or without their parents or under one roof. For instance, two brothers take wives but live together under one roof, or two sisters get married, and they all live together under one roof. It is always possible for one of the couples (and their children) to move out and start a separate household. One of the married siblings lives apart from the extended family when they have conflict or if their economic situation is good. Their residences are termed neolocal. As Grunlan and Mayers (1988) noted, “[N]eolocal means that the spouses are living by themselves in a new location as opposed to living with either set of parents or other relatives” (p.154). This neolocal family will often evolve into a nuclear family when the

couple has children. Sometimes an expanded family becomes a fragmented family for many reasons. In recent years more and more rural Tibetan individuals prefer to live as nuclear families even though there is no way to expand their lands and increase resources to support this dream. To maintain this arrangement, some young villagers go out and work in urban areas when the market economy forces them to seek opportunities from other locations rather than in their own village. Seeking work in urban areas also gives young Tibetans an opportunity to find partners in other areas and to build nuclear families in different locations. Usually a young couple needs to send their children back to the home village to let the grandparents take care of them.

Single-parent families are becoming increasingly popular because more Tibetans are moving around more to find work. In urban areas, women, especially working class women, are able to support their children without their husbands and they have developed many single-parent families because they have been able to become economically independent. This is in contrast to the past when a woman had to live with her parents or with a brother if she divorced her husband. Sometimes a single mother lives with her children, and her family becomes a fragmentary family. Nuclear families also break apart if the family's work forces members to work in separate locations. A fragmentary family often suffers from many problems as a social unit, and this unit functions well only if family members contribute their efforts to the family at the right times and in the right roles.

All family members are responsible for providing everything the family needs, including food, clothing, and shelter. This family duty is the highest priority for every single man and woman who lives in a Tibetan community. If a son is not loyal or responsible to the family, the father can exile him from the family. Patriarchy is the main family system, and the father often possesses the power and decision-making authority. This authority will be handed to his son if the son has more experience and skills to handle family issues. The head of family is always a male except when there is no male in the family. The head of family has the duty of managing the family and the network of kin. Thus, people criticize the head of the family if the family is poor or if members of the family behave badly. The head of the family's main task is to organize the available laborers in the family. In a given family, the different members will be responsible for specific tasks.

It is important to unify all family members including those who join the family through marriage so that the family is as productive as possible. The entire output of a family is usually shared by all of the family members. Collaboration of family members is the core of successful production. Therefore, family solidarity is often another important task for the head of the family. Without doubt, a good relationship of couples is essential to family solidarity. Some say this is why polyandry and polygamy exist in Tibet.

In Amdo, everyone has to work for his or her family, and the family redistributes accumulated resources to all members. The family is like a small state in some ways. Of course, blood relation is the core chain of the relationship, and other social forms and patterns cannot replace it. Therefore, a family cannot separate easily according to one's desire or power. Blood ties cannot be cut, although some people do sever family relationships for various reasons. Family ties are more than an ideological issue. Cutting blood family ties is almost as severe a taboo among Tibetans as incest is. A person may not receive respect from others if he or she has been exiled from a family. This kind of person often has to travel to another place in order to hide from his or her past and to build a new life elsewhere. If that occurs, that person's marriage is the origin of a new family.

The family is basic unit of societies, and the continuation of families allows families to function well or to continue existing. Many may argue that the biological desire for sex and the social need to bring up offspring are the main reasons humans build and maintain families. This could be a universal phenomenon, and couples may not stay together without intercourse except when they have no choice. Today in western countries, many couples do not wish to have children, but their sexual desires continue to be alive and well. In Amdo, however, people are still concerned about both sex and descent when they talk about marriage and family. It is difficult to accept or imagine a family that does not have a child. The maintenance of the family is not solely dependent on these factors; maintaining the family also depends on the alliances it creates through marriage.

Tibetans focus on the same challenges most other people focus on, namely, birth, age, illness, and death. Marriage is an important component of all of these challenges. People often think that it is important to reproduce the next generation in order to make a nation or ethnic group survive. Most people believe marriage is the only legitimate way to give birth to a child among many ancient and modern nations in the world. As Fox (2003) noted:

Kinship and marriage are about the basic facts of life. They are about "birth, and copulation, and death, the eternal round that seems to depress the poet but which excites, amongst others, the anthropologist. Copulation produces the relation between mates, which is the foundation of marriage and parenthood. Birth produces children and the lasting mother-child bond, the most fundamental and basic of all social bonds. Death produces a gap in the social group and demands a replacement. Birth and parenthood provide an answer – provide an heir. (p. 27)

We still do not have concrete evidence to determine when human beings created the marriage system. Tibetans do not care about the origin of marriage either, but they are often interested in others' ages and marital status. This is why Tibetans often ask questions such as, "How old are you?" "Are you married?" and "How many children do you have?" whenever they start a conversation with a stranger. These questions have become taboo in many western countries because of privacy, and westerners almost never

mention these facts to others. These issues are not private in Tibet, though many educated Tibetans may prefer to adopt the western way and avoid discussing these issues in public.

Tibetans love children, and one of their life philosophies is that there is no future or hope without a child or heir. Meanwhile, some of my friends from more developed countries claim that a child is a burden for their lives and that they may have happier lives without a child. However, Tibetan peasants and nomads are still the majority of Tibet's population. They do not have nursing homes or an adequate social welfare system for taking care of elderly people. Since the Chinese government implemented the One-Child policy in the late 1970's, Tibetan peasant and nomads are allowed to have three children, and official workers are allowed to have two children. (Chinese farmers also have right to have two children, but official workers are limited to one child if the first born child is male. For Tibetans, it is crucial to have many children who can inherit their parents' property and who are willing to take care of the parents as they age. Today's Tibetans have begun to become more open-minded about having fewer children because they feel that it is hard to feed many children without wealth in a modern society. Some families in Amdo give up a third child and try to receive a one time payment from the government for waiving the second (The award money is around 550 Euros.) or third child (The award money is around 355 Euros.). This money-oriented decision may bring undesirable consequences to Tibetan society and its culture. Traditionally, family members also have an obligation to help a sick family member. Family members and relatives and/or neighbors take care of funeral arrangements for the dead. Therefore, marriage is an important strategy for maintaining blood lineages and group ties.

A Tibetan risks having a very difficult life if he or she decides to leave the family. The only acceptable departure of a family is to become a monk or nun. Family and community are places where people find support and identity. These two institutions force people to act collectively and cooperatively. As is true elsewhere, many Tibetans consider love to be the core element of a marriage. It is said to be true that young Tibetan boys and girls begin to seek love and find soul mates when they come of age. Recently, most of adolescents have had the freedom to seek soul mates of their choosing, but parents usually arrange marriages. Sometimes love leads a man and a woman to enter the realm of samsara. I will briefly touch on rite of passage and courtship before I discuss marriage customs in Amdo because young boys and girls at a certain age can start courtship, and courtship is the precondition for forming couples.

4.0 Teenage Rites of Passage

Love and romance are not normally discussed among family members in Tibet. In towns and cities, open-minded Tibetan parents and children may discuss courtship but not sex. One of my Chinese friends from Hong Kong who was educated in the United States and who worked there for 40 years, has adopted a Tibetan teenager as her son, or *gan er zi* 干

儿子 in Chinese, and she was shocked by the reaction of her son when she tried to provide him with condoms for safe sex. Her Tibetan son was angry about her action and told her that Tibetan mothers never ever discussed sex with their sons. To the son, it was shameful and abnormal to talk with his mother about sex issues.

Young Tibetans have the freedom to have sexual relations when they want to have sex, but they may not pay enough attention to sexual risks such as venereal diseases and pregnancy because they do not receive sex education in the home or in school. Traditionally, girls over the age of 15 are referred to as women because they are eligible to marry. Boys over the age of 15 are referred to as men for the same reason. A Tibetan saying claims, “A 15-year-old boy should not ask guidance from his father, and a 15-year-old girl should not beg for food from her mother” (Tibetan: *pho lo bco lnga bud nas blo pha ma 'dri, mo lo bco lnga bud nas zas ma ma slongs*). This saying illustrates that Tibetan teenagers can be independent after they reach the age of 15. They also have rights to seek sexual activities when they reach this age. According to old customs, boys do not need to pass through any rites of passage in Amdo. However, a boy may get a new robe and a gun (if possible) when he reaches the age of 15. His family also arranges a symbolic ceremony for him. From that day on, he has the right to participate in village meetings and discuss village issues with other people.

Mkhar-'bum, a Tibetan folklorist, observed, “Habitually, families in Rdobis symbolically arranged an adult ceremony for a boy when he reached the age of 15 in the past. I mean before 1958 when Chinese revolution ideas were brought here” (Interview, September 2009). A 15-year-old boy can receive a full share if the villagers share property, and he also needs to pay the adult tax. This informs the group that a boy has developed into an adult and is ready to face many tests and challenges from then on. The same folklorist said, “Prior to 15 years of age, a boy does not need to pay tax, and he can only receive a half share [half of work and/or reward] from the village” (Interview, September 2009).

Rites of passage for women are practiced in many parts of Amdo. The age at which they are carried out varies from place to place, but they usually occur for a girl between the ages of 13 and 17²⁵. This rite was called as “hair braiding” (Tibetan: *skra phab pa*), or some scholars translated it as “hair changing” or “hair dressing ritual” ('Brug mo skyid et al., 2010, pp. 151 and 173). It is believed that a girl's hair should be combed by a woman who has a good reputation in the community, and the girl gets the hairstyle of an adult woman. The description of hair braiding in Stag rig Tibetan village by writers is similar to the previous discussion. 'Brug mo skyid et al. (2010) pointed out:

The hair dressing ritual announces that the girl has become a young woman and is ready to marry. After the ritual, she may have a boyfriend and ponder her future married life. The hair dressing ritual is held when a girl is 13, 15, or 17 years old. Fifteen is the usual age. (p. 173)

²⁵ Tibetans prefer to choose odd numbers of date for marriage rituals and other rituals. This date issue will be discussed later in this chapter.

The meaning of hair braiding also conforms to Eriksen's (1995) asserted, "In many of the societies anthropologists have studied, circumcision of the genitals or body tattoos function as visible signs indicating that one is to be regarded as an adult person" (p.53). As 'Brug mo skyid et al. (2010) mentioned, "During the hair ritual, the girl's hairstyles is changed to that of a young woman" (p.174). Tibetans do not have a tattoo tradition, but a woman's hairstyle functions as a visible sign indicating her identity as an adult person. Her new hairstyle is different from her childhood hairstyle, and others consider her an adult. Once the rite is completed, the girl becomes a woman, and a man can take her for his wife when the two families negotiate a marriage. This rite provides a sort of blueprint for girls in order to obtain adult status and contribute to their community. As Eriksen (1995) noted:

These rites are strongly public events whereby an individual or an entire age cohort moves from one status to another. The most important are usually those that mark the transition from child or adolescent to adult man or woman. (p. 53)

Tibetan folklorist, Mkhar-'bum, and his fellow villager, Dkon-mchg-chos-'phel, confirmed the significance of the hair braiding ritual in Rdobis township. Traditionally there was a ritual of becoming an adult or a rite of passage for girls. A girl cannot get married unless she has already passed the adult ritual or hair braiding ritual. A girl's family will not allow her to marry without this ritual (Interviews, September 2009 and October 2010 respectively).

Girls from the agricultural areas of Amdo perceive rites of passage this way. There are also alternative ways to marry a female person who did not complete the rites of passage. So-ba Sprang-thar-rgya-mtsho (2009) noted that a female who has not undergone the rites of passage can be a bride in Grotshang,²⁶ but her hair must be braided as an adult woman the day before her wedding and she will get a different hairstyle than other an women who get married after they have had rites of passage. A wife-to-be who has not gone through the rites of passage will get a braided hairstyle with three plaits, and a wife-to-be who has been through the rites of passage will get a braided hairstyle with two plaits when her hair is braided for her wedding (pp 20-21). Suoduanzhi 索端智 (2001) mentioned that the rites of passage for women also exist in Grotshang. Women have the right to have a partner or get married, and they can even have children after the family has arranged the rite of passage (p. 29).

²⁶ An ancient Tibetan tribe that is located in northeastern part of Ziling (pinyin: Xining), and it is only a few kilometers far away this city. According to So-ba sprang-thar rgya-mtso, today Phula gyangrdsong, Karing, Lhakhang, Dbyartswa, Sbrargan, Tsongthar villages of Ledu County and 'Ba'gtsang village of Pingan County are called the Seven Villages of Grotshang and Tibetans live in these areas are called Grotshangba "Grotshang people." He also noted that Tibetan villages in Minghe County, in south of Huangzhong County, and Dmargtsang village in Huzhu County are belong to Grotshang.

It is obvious that the hair braiding ritual takes place before marriage and when a girl is 13, 15, or 17 years old in Rdobis and in other Tibetan villages. The age must be an odd number. If the economic situation of a family is good, then the family should celebrate or arrange a rite of passage for the daughter when she is 13 or 15 years old. A poor family may celebrate when she is 17 years old because the family may not be able to prepare a “headgear or headdress” (Tibetan: *ral gdan*), which is made with small pieces of corals and other precious stones, for the daughter both during the ritual and the wedding. A poor family cannot afford this and may postpone the ritual for that reason. However, today Rdobis villagers gave up making headgear and simply celebrate the passage of that rite. ‘Brugs mo skyid et al. (2010) also added that:

This is only required on the ritual day today, but, in the past, this hairstyle change was permanent and anyone who went through the hair dressing ritual no longer dressed her hair like that of an unmarried girl. Instead, she braided her hair like that of a married woman and always wore hair ornaments. (p.174)

Some Tibetans (Rtsekhog, Bongstag, Rmachu, Cone, Kluchu, Bsangchu, Dpa’ris, upper Thebo) rarely arrange a hair ritual for their daughters, but they have the hair ritual for a bride before dawn on the day of her wedding ceremony. The bride’s hairstyle is changed into a woman’s hairstyle during the hair ritual. This symbolically means she becomes an adult and can marry.

5.0 Courtship

Amdobas then and now have had some freedoms in terms of seeking and finding their soul mates. In the past, young boys and girls could only seek partners among their own class. Though there has never been a formal class system in Amdo, Amdobas had a kind of caste notion, and it separated people from other groups and limited a person’s social scope. For instance, a child from a rich family or local chief’s family had to search for a soul mate from the same class. Poor teenagers were prohibited from seeking soul mates from an upper class. The concept of class does not exist anymore, and it does not affect courtship, but young people today still gravitate to partners who have the same social background.

Many Tibetans avoid displays of affection in public. They often try to hide their emotions and love in their hearts rather than express it openly. Tibetans may only inform their most intimate friends that they are in a relationship with someone. He or she always tries to keep the secret to him or herself. Tibetans often use the term “good friend” (Tibetan: *bzang sa*) instead of “boyfriend and girlfriend” (Tibetan: *dga’ rogs* or *a rogs*). Tibetans do not use these terms in public, especially when older people are present.

Tibetans do not engage in public displays of affection. This is very different from behavior I have observed in western countries where I have seen couples and/or friends

lustily kiss each other and tightly cuddle each other on trains, buses, in shops, and on the streets. It is true that almost everywhere young and old people cuddle each other in many western cities and towns.

Tibetans do not touch or kiss each other openly or in public. The only situation one kisses another person in public is when an adult kisses a child or a child kisses an adult. It is even embarrassing for Tibetan family members to watch films or television programs in which actors and actresses are kissing each other or having sexual intercourse. Females may run into another room or out of the house if these actions come to the screen when all the family members are in front of the television at the same time. Tibetan parents and children (specifically, mother and son, father and daughter), brothers and sisters do not listen to love songs on the radio or on tape recorders or at festivals if they all are present together. In fact, Tibetans enjoy love songs, and they enjoy local festivals because of the love song competitions among local singers. In some cases, young men and women fall in love through singing love songs to each other during festivals or other occasions. We should keep in mind that the love song is one of the special Tibetan ways of finding a soul mate. Some people fall in love because of the content of the love song moves ones' heart, or some people just like others' voices and they become soul mates. Tibetans still have the tradition of singing love songs and they may find their soul mates when they listen to love songs. Therefore, love songs are prohibited at homes and in public where close relatives are present. In the 1950s, the Chinese government broadcasted Tibetan love songs on radio programs, and they embarrassed many Tibetan families. As a result, radio stations cut the program and never aired Tibetan love songs again.

There are no set rules for men in terms of pursuing women. However, there are several common ways of approaching young women besides singing love songs in Amdo. One alternative to singing a love song is to send a written love song or letter to a potential female companion. The letter or written love song could be delivered by the writer himself or by one of his friends. This is rare in traditional Amdo because many Tibetans cannot read and write. Sometimes, of course, an illiterate young man may ask a young literate Tibetan man to write a love song for him. In the same way, a woman asks her friend to read the letter or love song for her if she is illiterate. The majoritys of farmer or nomadic women are illiterate. Therefore, a young Tibetan may use a simple way to show his love. He throws a small piece of dry yak dung or small stones, which are not intended to cause harm but which are intended to evoke a response. A woman who ignores such attempts at attention is not interested in the pursuer. The woman may throw the items back at the pursuer if she is interested in dating him.

A man may need to ask his friends to give a letter to a woman if he and she are both literate²⁷. This occurred most often among educated Tibetans two decades ago. Young men often send verbal messages to the young woman of interest. A woman can reject his

²⁷ Many adults in Amdo are still illiterate.

proposal if she is not interested in him. Some men give up immediately, but others will persist until the woman accepts. In Amdo, as in other parts of the world, a man may not approach a woman directly or propose marriage immediately. The man may first flirt by trying to grasp a woman's hat (In some other Tibetan areas a man may grab other small objects a woman might possess.) if he considers the woman to be the right one for him. After he has grabbed a hat from a woman, he has to return the hat to the woman within several days. The woman will happily take her hat back if she loves him. If she does not take the hat (or other item) back, it is an indication that she is not interested. (Dan Xiuying 旦秀英 2008; I also observed this in 1999.) Normally in Tibet, and in other places, a young woman's appearance, looks, or beauty is a man's priority in his mind when he does not know the woman well or first time he meets a woman. A woman's face and/or body may attract a man's eyes easily and quickly. Therefore, Tibetan men often try to get or grab belongings from attractive women, and a beautiful woman may be approached by several men on the same day.

New technologies such as the telephone (including cell phones) and motorcycles (as well as cars) have brought alternatives to dating. Education or interactions with other people have also influenced Tibetans who have received a modern education. Advanced technologies have reshaped the way Tibetans court members of the opposite sex and have relationships. For instance, many Tibetan men will call or text (if both can read Chinese) women on their cell phones to ask for an "appointment" (Tibetan: *chad*). Among educated people, e-mails and other computer devices are also popular. New technology has definitely had a remarkable influence on Tibetan lifestyles, even in courtship and relationship behavior.

In Amdo, as in other places in the world, men are often sexually active and actively pursue women. This is both a privilege and a challenge for men. However, in Amdo, women do not pursue men, and they do not show their love directly. A woman may hint to a man if she is interested in him. A Tibetan man may judge her love by her eye contact. Tibetans call this eye hint or contact "eye arrow" (Tibetan: *mig gi sur mda*'). Traditionally, in the countryside, a man is too shy to directly express his love to a woman if he falls in love with her. He often asks a favor from one of his friends to deliver his oral or written message and make an appointment with her. This appointment usually takes place at night and they may have sex if they accept each other.

While courtship is relatively free from rules, there are some rules that must be followed when it is time for marriage. Marriage is not only a personal matter, but it also a family or group affair. Parents and/or other family members make the final decision regarding marriage whether or not a man has a soul mate. As 'Jam-dbyangs-blo-gros noted, "In the past, most marriages were arranged by parents in Golok. Nowadays, young boys and girls have the freedom to choose their partners" (Interview, August 2009). Amdobas from agricultural and nomadic areas have a special and unique tradition for pursuing women through "teasing dog" or "night visiting" (Tibetan: *khyi kha brtses*). In

Amdo, unmarried men (and some married men who have lovers) or boys travel at night to seek lovers after people have gone to sleep. Many peasants and nomads still practice night visiting in Amdo, though new generations have other options for satisfying their physical desires. In recent years, a few factors have affected the night visiting tradition according to my fieldwork – namely, modern education, modern technology (such as cell phone, motorcycle, and car), prostitution, and hotels. A negative result of the night visiting is premarital pregnancy. In some places premarital pregnancy may affect a woman's future marriage, but some places it would not be a big problem because her parents or brother will take care of her baby if the father of the child does not want to marry her. She may also have a chance to marry another man whose family accepts her with or without the child.

Once the young man has “gotten the girl,” the next question that needs to be answered is how the couple gets married. The following sections are devoted to a discussion of different types of arranged marriages in Amdo.

6.0 Marriages in Amdo

6.1 Arranged Marriage

Tibetan parents traditionally arrange their children's marriages. Parents often choose a bride or groom from their friends and/or neighbors' sons or daughters. They investigate the background of the potential partner thoroughly. That is why they have less work to do if they choose him or her from a familiar family. As Eriksen (1995) pointed out, “The ideology prevalent in ‘Western’ societies to the effect that marriage should be built on pure love, which may even transcend class boundaries, is peculiar if seen in a comparative perspective” (p. 96). Snying-lcags from Rebgong said, “A young boy does not have the capability to bring the right bride to his parents family, and the parents often negotiate with their neighbors or friends to get a wife for him. Love is not a priority in a village marriage” (Interview, September 2011).

Nomadic families usually prefer to find a potential partner from another nomadic family because the partner will have the skills necessary for a nomadic lifestyle. Arranged marriage is an old-fashioned marriage form in rural nomadic and agricultural areas. As Zla-bhe from Mgolog pointed out:

In Mgolog, parents used to arrange marriages for their children in the past, but today young people have the freedom to seek their own partners. For instance, I chose my own wife, and we got married. It is still true that my parents had to approve my marriage (Interview, September 2009).

Arranged marriage has not totally vanished today, and it has been revived in some regions because many women go away to school, and many people now have trouble

finding women of the same age where they live and work. Dkon-mchog-chos-'phel, one of my interviewees from Rdobis, observed:

No girls are left in village and all of them go to school. They do not want to stay in the village after they graduate from school. I am worrying that village boys will not find wives from our own village. Where if they can get wives? Maybe from more remote areas where children are unable to go to school. (Interview, October 2010)

Snying-lcags, a peasant from Rebgong also noted:

The marriage age has decreased, and there are fewer girls left in the village because many girls go to school and have already been spoken for by some boys. Many young boys cannot find wives in my village if they get older than 18 years old. Parents try to arrange marriage as early as possible, and they feel that there is competition to get a bride in our village. (Interview, September 2011)

It seems that modern education affects everyone's life in rural or urban areas, and women have become a rare resource for villagers. Therefore, some parents still force their children to accept a marriage without love. Many young people agree to their parents' decision and get married without love but with a sense of duty and responsibility. Others refuse to go along with an arranged marriage and seek a love marriage, but it is a difficult task for young men in villages. A conflict may occur between parents and children if a proposal of arranged marriage has to be dropped. This will not only damage relationship between the parents and children, but it also will affect the friendship among alliances. Usually, many young women and men accept the parents' choices regarding marriage. In the past, some farmers even arranged marriages for their unborn children. For instance, when two friends make an agreement on their future babies' marriages, the deal is that the one who has a daughter should give her to the son of his friend in the future. This tradition may not survive today, but it did exist in the past, and it still affects many couples. It seems to be that self-determined marriage is gradually growing but still cannot replace arranged marriages in remote areas of Amdo. The arranged marriage tradition leads some groups of Tibetans in Amdo to practice close-cousin marriage in the same way the Han Chinese do. Nomads only marry each other when they cannot trace back their blood relationship at all. In other words, they will get married if their families think that they are absolutely not relatives. Rinzin Thargyal (2007) pointed out that:

The kinship network was itself actualized largely in times of gift giving, for instance on the occurrence of birth, death, seeking a marriage partner, marriage, or disasters requiring assistance. A marriage partner putatively must be a person who was seven or nine generations removed from the Ego. (p.174)

Nomadic people do not care if they find a groom or bride from far away. They are accustomed to travel and often have animals to use for transportation. Sometimes they also take wives from agricultural areas because Tibetan women know how to milk yak or other domestic animals. A nomadic woman may not marry a farmer because of her lack

of agriculture-related skills and knowledge. A farmer simply declared this to me during my fieldwork in a Tibetan agriculture village of Batse or Lintan County, Gansu Province:

Nomads sometimes take wives from our village, but our village men never took wives from nomad areas. The reason is simple that women from nomadic areas do not want to stay in agricultural area where she cannot consume yak butter every day. (Interview, August 2009)

6.2 Racial and Class Endogamy

Many villages in agricultural areas practice endogamy at the local level. Some farmers also practice cross-cousin (father's sister's children and mother's brother's children) and parallel-cousin (father's brother's children and mother's sister's children) marriages. In theory, all Tibetans recognize kinship or relatives along patrilineal and matrilineal lines. Therefore, both cross-cousins and parallel-cousins are classified as unmarriageable in Tibetan society. Traditionally Tibetans practice ethnic endogamy, Tibetans marry with Tibetans, but not with people from other ethnic groups, to protect themselves from the mixture of *sha khrag* or to keep their pure Tibetan lineage, which is called *rus rgyud* in Tibetan. Many farmers cannot travel long distances because they do not have enough animals for transportation, and they often seek alliances from neighbors. Some families even make alliances with close relatives. The tradition of class endogamy mostly disappeared following the Chinese Cultural Revolution, but racial or ethnic endogamy still is strongly supported by Tibetans.

Traditionally, Tibetans tend to favor marrying other Tibetans in order to maintain the pure bloodline. They try to avoid Tibetan-Han or other forms of intermarriage and discriminate against those Tibetans who have wives or husbands from other ethnic groups. Marriage is not only an issue of pure blood; it is also a power or class issue. That is why during the Chinese Cultural Revolution the Chinese government destroyed the old marriage system and introduced a new system. This new system encouraged Tibetan-Han intermarriage and cross-class marriage, although Tibetans in Amdo never fundamentally developed any kind of class system. The Chinese Cultural Revolution was an important turning point in the marriage system in Amdo and in other places in China. However, Amdobas practiced a kind of class marriage or class endogamy in the past because the local hierarchy system prohibited a child of a local chieftain from getting married to a child from a poor family. Ma Rong (2008) confirmed that, "Marriage between aristocratic and ordinary people, between general occupations and 'low class occupations' (blacksmith, butcher, beggar, corpse carrier, etc.) were also forbidden" (p.220). The notion of low class occupations could be related to Buddhist philosophy.

My research found that some families (in Rebong and Grotshang) still practice group endogamy. Grotshang is a special Tibetan tribe where Tibetans still strongly support tribe or group endogamy because they have a special local dialect and traditions.

In addition, historically this Tibetan tribe is surrounded by many Han Chinese villages, and its avoidance of assimilation might lead the tribe to practice endogamy. Today parents from this tribe still hope their young generations will find partners from the same tribe and refuse spouses from other Tibetan tribes. However, it is crucial to admit that the marriage rules have changed in last several decades all across Tibet because of economical and political transformation.

Sounan Caidan 索南才旦 described the current marriage situation in Nangchen (Chinese: 囊谦; pinyin: Nangqian) County of Yulshul (Chinese: 玉树; pinyin: Yushu) Prefecture:

Nowadays, as the society changes, we have broken the taboo of "hierarchy or caste endogamy" marriage, but there is the prohibition of a close relative or the same blood marriage. People have more freedom regarding love and marriage. Inter-marriage often occurs, and an arranged marriage is nonexistent among people who live in urban areas or who have received education. We can find some arranged marriage cases in the agricultural and pastoral areas. However, the children have the power to choose their partner for marriage. In both, the urban and rural areas, people have the right to have freedom of love and marriage. Self-determination is mainstream in Nangqian.

This statement seems to be based on romance than on reality. Tibetans from Grotshang are well educated and often live in urban areas, but they still have to accept the partners their parents have arranged for them. It does not matter whether one has the highest education degree or received the best education. For instance, one of my high school classmates who obtained an MBA in the United States still had to marry the partner from the same Grotshang tribe that his parents chose for him. Not all Grotshang people refuse to break the tribal tradition, but only a few may go beyond their tradition.

6.3 Excluding Relative Marriage

Most Tibetans do not get married with somebody from the same "bone lineage" or *rus rgyud*. Generally, this bone lineage is passed or carried on by relatives from the father's side. In some places, relatives of the mother's side can also pass on the bone lineage. Therefore, it is not acceptable to get married to a child from a mother's relatives. Bao, Zhiming and Wande Ka'er (1997) mentioned that in western Tibet, the function of the *rus rgyud* is to formulate the range of intermarriage and nonmarital intercourse. It is to say that man and woman cannot get married and have sexual intercourse if both of them belong to the same *rus rgyud* (p. 359). In the Grotshang tribe, not only are such intermarriages banned, marriage within the same tribe is also required. Marriage outside the tribe is tolerable, but intermarriage is not. *Rus pa* is important element of marriage inside the tribe (Suoduanzhi, 2001, p.28).

Many Tibetan nomads equally can recall the names of *rus rgyud* from both parents' sides. In contrast, agricultural populations have the same tradition, but they often ignore

the mother's *rus rgyud*, and one may take a wife from mother's *rus rgyud*, but it is prohibited to have sex if two people have the same *rus rgyud* on the mother's side. Aziz (1978) learned from Tibetan families of D'ing-ri that Tibetans cannot be considered patrilineal, but some Tibetans in D'ing-ri practice patrilineal descent (pp. 118-122). It seems we cannot simply conclude that Tibetans in Amdo or other areas practice patrilineal or matrilineal descent; Tibetans have their own unique rules for descent and marriage.

Relative marriage or cross-cousin marriage is a big taboo in Amdo. This is also a basic rule for marriage. Marriage between first cousins and other blood relatives is also prohibited, and many nomads believe such marriages will bring bad luck. Villagers also criticize this type of marriage. According to Wikipedia:

In April 2002, the *Journal of Genetic Counseling* released a report, which showed that the potential risk of birth defects in a child born of first cousins was slightly higher than the risk associated with a non-cousin couple. The report estimated the increased risk for first cousins at 1.7-2.8% over the base risk of about 3%, or about the same as that of any woman over age 40. ^[1] Put differently, first-cousin marriages entail roughly the same increased risk of birth defects as a woman faces when she gives birth at age 41 (roughly 6%) rather than at 30 (roughly 3%). Critics argue that banning first-cousin marriages would make as much sense as trying to ban childbearing by older women. These numbers were reported only for *first instances* of cousin mating; repeated generations of cousin coupling can increase this risk, especially if the original ancestors were carriers of deleterious recessive genes (a founder effect). ^[2] (Retrieved Jan 7, 2010 from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cousin_couple)

Tibetans do not have any scientific evidence to show problems associated with relative marriage, but the social norms and values cause them to avoid marriage among close relatives. Tibetans may have empirical evidence against relative marriage. However, is more likely that Tibetans' condemnation of relative marriage is a psychological and cultural concern rather than a biological one.

Marriage rules have changed to some extent, and now many Tibetans marry people from other ethnic groups. The class endogamy no longer exists today in Amdo, though people are still concerned about the occupational backgrounds of potential spouses. The families' financial statuses are becoming more important because the market economic system forces people to think too much about money or wealth. That is why there is a joke that says, "The one who owns a home has a better chance of getting a girlfriend than a homeless person does." People from urban or rural areas still need to consider other rules regarding marriage. These rules should be considered before a marriage is actually proposed to a family, or to a man/woman.

7.0 Some Criteria for Selecting a Spouse Among Amdobas

All societies have certain expectations for potential spouses. Generally, one's occupation and social status affect his or her future life and marriage. In Amdo, Tibetans have many

criteria for selecting spouses. Skal Bzang Nor Bu and Stuart (1996) found four criteria for selecting a partner in Rdobis Township. “Prohibitory regulations in partner selection include marrying paternal cousins, non-Tibetan, non-Buddhists, and those who have incompatible local guardian deities” (p.444). According to my fieldwork and other Tibetan resources (So-ba, 2009; Tshe-brtan-rgyal, 2010; Sanmucai, 2006), Amdobas have three unique criteria which must be considered when one selects a spouse: family protector (Tibetan: *srung ma*), “purity of the flesh and bone” (Tibetan: *sha rus pa gtsang mi gtsang*) and personality (reputation, geniality, and kindness) (Tibetan: *gshis ka*). Tshul-blo el al. (1996) observed that, in Mgarrrtse tribe, the clan and parents have three criteria (a. relatives cannot marry, and cousins must be at least seven generations removed, b. purity of the flesh and bone, and c. diseases which affect the next generation, for example, “leprosy” or *mdze*) for selecting spouse, although youth have right to choose their own partner (p.195). The taboo of close relative marriage is already discussed in previous section, and in this section, I elaborate the three unique criteria and other elements that affect a marriage decision.

7.1 Family Protector or Deity

Every Tibetan family has a family protector or deity to protect it from disaster or undesired incidents. This protector is inherited from generation to generation. A male descendant often has to accept and worship the protector of his male ancestor. The marriage residence determines which family protector a new couple accepts and worships. For instance, if the new couple lives with husband parents’ family, they have to choose the same protector from the husband’s family. If the new couple stays with the wife’s parents’ family, they have to accept her family protector. In a neolocal couple, or a couple that maintains its own residence, the wife is expected to follow her husband to worship his family protector. A family only changes its protector under certain circumstances, and no family easily accepts another protector without good reason. If a family had a recent tragedy, a lama might suggest that the family choose another protector. *Dpal ldan lha mo*, *Mgon po*, *Gza’*, *Chos rgyal*, *Gur*, *Rnam sras* and *Dam can* are popular protectors in Amdo.

Locals believe that a “fight/conflict of protectors” (Tibetan: *srung ma ‘khrugs*) will occur, and this will bring illness or other undesirable accidents to the family or individuals. To prevent such accidents from happening, Tibetans are very cautious about a man’s fiancée’s background. They think that it is better to take action before the disaster happens. Therefore, one has to investigate a potential partner’s family protector and make sure that the two protectors of the two families will not have problems. Some villages take this consideration more seriously than others. Many people do not care about the protector issue because they believe that the future wife will not bring her family protector to her husband’s family and that she and her child will worship the

husband's protector. A Tibetan Bonpo lama from Rebgong has taught his followers, "We do not need to teach our daughters how to practice our religion [Bon], but we have to teach our *mna' ma* [daughters-in-law]. Because the mothers will shape their children's beliefs" (A Tibetan farmer, Interview, September 2010).

This idea also hints that a woman has to worship her husbands' protector and practice her husband's religion in Rebgong. It is said to be true that a woman does not have a specific protector and will often follow her husband or father in order to receive protection from his protector. Puhua Dongzhi (2006) also mentioned, "The bride and her companions' arrive at the groom's home; the bride is prostrating three times to the groom's home's door protective deity, family god, and to the fire deity." However, my fieldwork shows that many Tibetans worry less about the protector issue when they talk about marriage. In particular, nomads may not seriously investigate the protectors of potential partners, but they really care about religious beliefs. For instance, a Buddhist family rarely accepts a bride from a Bonpo family. Religious beliefs should not be the core of marriage, and yet they still influence marriage in different ways. Tibetans have a supernatural attitude toward their lives, and their fear of the protector or other religious tradition, creates superstitions, which, in turn, create more fear when they need to make decisions and they need to consult monks or lamas whenever they face difficulties or fears. Their fear increases the power of religious figures, and religious leaders can then supervise laypeople's daily lives though the Buddhist doctrines teach them to escape from worldly matters. Tibetans are also afraid of the impurity of other people's body or lineage. This cultural and biological feeling about impurity certainly affects one's marriage and reputation.

7.2 Purity of Flesh and Blood or *Sha Rus Pa*

Purity and impurity of a family is related to "flesh and bone" (Tibetan: *sha rus pa*) of the family members and these are big issues when Tibetans deal with marriage and courtship. This is not related to the exogamy issue, but it is a biological question. Tibetans assume that *sha rus pa* is related to one's body. There is a Tibetan phrase "whether or not one's flesh and bone are pure or clean" (Tibetan: *sha rus pa gtsang mi gtsang*). Therefore, it is important to examine one's health prior to marriage. Suo Duanzhi 索端智(2001) pointed out that Tibetans stress *sha rus pa* when they arrange a marriage in the same tribe (p. 28). *Sha rus pa* is mainly important for the purpose of avoiding genetic or transmitted diseases such as "leprosy" (Tibetan: *mdze*), and another is "body odor" (Tibetan: *bse dri*).

There could be other genetic or transmitted diseases in Amdo, but Tibetans are not able to identify those diseases. Many people have had leprosy in agricultural regions, but not many people in nomadic areas have the disease. People have to avoid men or women who have leprosy or whose family members have leprosy history/background when they seek marriage partners. Tibetans assume that this disease cannot be treated and that it will

come back to a person after many generations. Tibetans discriminate against people whose family has had a history of this disease. In Amdo, people place a lot of importance on this disease both physically and psychologically.

As mentioned above, the second most important biological issue in Amdo is “body odor” or *bse dri*. This term basically describes the body odor that westerners have. In some people, this odor is stronger than it is in others. Both farmers and herders do not welcome people who have *bse dri*. Tibetans discriminate against people who have this smell. At school, a student with this smell cannot find a common friend and desk mate. Many students asked me to move a student who had a strong body odor away from other students when I was a teacher in Amdo. Tibetans believe that the person who has body odor cannot smell his or her smell, and he or she often does not know that he or she is offending others. It is impolite to tell him or her about the smell. If a person who knows he or she has the smell, he or she feels bad and often tries to avoid others. Tibetans take this smell issue seriously, and a strong body odor is considered undesirable in a potential mate. Ye-shis-chos-‘phel from Rdobis Township observed:

If a person falls in love with another who has impure *sha rus pa* and they get married without inquiring about each other’s background, then later other people will find out about the *sha rus pa* problem of his wife. Then locals think the husband made a big mistake for his whole life and his next generation. He destroyed the next generation. He got a wife but his next generation has been contaminated, and they will have trouble finding spouses. What can his children do in the future? (Interview, September 2010)

Sanmucai 三木才 also (2006) noted that the parents absolutely do not accept a marriage if the future bride or bridegroom has *huchou* 狐臭 which is the Chinese term for body odor, and literally means fox smell. The parents completely oppose allowing their children to marry people who have unclean/impure bone. The only option for this situation is for the couple to escape from their home village and try to become residents of other community where people do not know their background.

Tibetans seem to have very sensitive senses of smell toward this body odor. They assumed that the majority of Westerners have this smell, and they are curious about how Westerners feel about this smell. Most Westerners do not think this smell is a big problem. Westerners shower every day and use a lot of perfumes and deodorants to reduce the possibility of spreading body odor.

Many Tibetans feel that the Han Chinese have “the smell of the Chinese or Chinese body odor” (Tibetan: *rgya dri*), and this smell is equal to *bse dri*, although Tibetans believe that these two smells are not the same smell. Chinese people also think that Tibetans have a weird smell, and Chinese often hold their noses when rural Tibetans, in particular nomads, are close to them. I do believe that majority of Tibetan do not have this bad smell from their birth, but they produce this bad smell because they lack of facilities to clean their bodies regularly. Therefore, it is hygienic problem rather than a bone issue. Both Tibetans and Chinese make assumptions about the other’s social and

cultural norms when they do not understand them. However, some Tibetan villagers consider that intermarriage is a *sha rus pa* issue. For instance, in Rdobis Township, there are two Chinese families in this Tibetan village. No Tibetan is interested in marrying into the Chinese families, and these two Chinese families hardly get a bride from their Tibetan neighbors. *Sha rus pa* includes other ethnic groups such as Han Chinese and Hui. A Tibetan man stated:

Many Tibetans in cities and towns get married with Han Chinese, but locals may discriminate against them if they visit their home village since they have Chinese wives. In the countryside, even clerks or officials do not want to get married to Han Chinese. (Interview, September 2009)

We should keep in mind that the body odor is not just a genetic or biological issue; it has a connection to the local mindset. Some Tibetan villagers and herders even argue that “bad breath” (Tibetan: *kha rul*) is a part of impurity issues. Various forms of endogamy exist in Amdo because of local people’s mentality. Although recently the rate of international marriage has been increasing in Amdo, Tibetans are still proud of the purity of bone or blood.

The question of intermarriage is not limited to biological issues. Culture and personality influence marriage partner choices as well. Few Tibetans are willing to marry Han Chinese girls, though Tibetan boys are very popular among Chinese female students at many colleges in Chinese cities. Some may argue that cultural differences and personalities cause the Tibetans and Chinese to keep their distances from each other where courtship is concerned.

7.3 Temperament

Personality is the third issue to be investigated when it comes to choosing a marriage partner. Many Tibetans commonly assume that “the reputation of a mother is the indicator of the bride’s personality.” Others believe that a person’s personality is generated by his or her family education, or upbringing. It may be not easy to judge, one’s personality before actually meeting someone. The parents often play a big role in finding out everything about a potential marriage partner for their son through the woman’s family, friends, and neighbors. This is why many Tibetans believe arranged marriages are better than pure love marriages. As Snying-lcangs pointed out:

We usually think a good mother should have a good daughter. So the mother is the basic source for finding out about her daughter’s personality. Today, people are different, many people only think about themselves but not others. Girls from remote areas still have a traditional character. I often think about finding a daughter-in-law from a remote village though it is not realistic. Here [villages near towns or cities] girls do not want to get married to a man who has old parents and siblings at schools or monasteries. You know, they ask “Is there any garbage in that family? Are there feeding pigs in that family?” They mean that garbage is metaphor for old parents who are useless and pigs are metaphors for students and monks who need financial

support from their families. This is the trend of the present time. Not everyone is like this, but it tells us something. (Interview, September 2009)

This argument demonstrates why Tibetans are more and more concerned about a future wife or husband's personality or quality. Traditionally, girls seek husbands who have living parents and many siblings. Today, young people are more interested in gaining an economic advantage and having a comfortable environment. A new bride does not need to work outside if the family she is marrying into is wealthy or if the husband has a good income. A family's economic situation plays a big role in people's minds, though many people deny this openly. Tibetans still argue that honesty and skills are more important than a person's economic situation. It seems that labor skills are more or less related to economic production. Sanmucai (2006) summarized some qualities of desirable future spouses in Bongstag²⁸. A man should have skills of moving and building tents, herding sheep or yaks, cutting wool of sheep and/or yak, making ropes, and hunting and slaughtering domestic animals. He should also have intelligence and methods to manage the family and its wealth. A good bride should have the skills to handle daily domestic tasks and support her parents-in-laws, brothers-in-laws, and sisters-in-laws. She should not gossip, and she should always understand the needs of the family. She is required to be good wife and mother, etc. (p.190) These qualifications are criteria for good husbands and wives, and they also indicate the local people's values and social norms. Many places in Amdo, locals are also concerned about handicapped and divorced persons, as well as of people who have children before marriage.

A family will arrange a marriage after having investigated the aforementioned issues and decide whether they want to arrange a marriage with a woman from the same village or from a different village. Members of the same village often know each other's situations. The future bride's family is also concerned about these factors and will only make a decision after they have investigated the husband's background.

7.4 Predicting a Marriage: Numerology or Mo

Both nomadic and agricultural communities take criteria discussed above very seriously when arranging the marriages of their children. Some urban families also take these issues seriously. Urban dwellers are more concerned about economic issues than these factors, but the traditions remain strong there as well. As result of countrymen or urban dwellers still feeling uncertain about their marriages after they have investigated future spouses' background, they have a tradition of consulting a monk or a lama to predict the future of their marriages. In considering a marriage decision, a family also seeks a numerologist's help. Therefore, *Mo* and Chinese zodiac signs are important. Grunfeld

²⁸ Eighteen Tibetan tribes located in Mtshonub (Haixi 海西) Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Qinghai Province.

(1996) noted that, “Marriage was not considered a religious ceremony; indeed, it was more closely tied up with astrology and superstition than religion” (p.19). Two different kinds of numerologists can perform the evaluation. Clergy members and sorcerers of Buddhist or Bonpo can perform numerology. Local astrologers can also do it or check the Chinese zodiac signs of future spouses.

Some families consult a lama or monk to perform numerology or *mo* for predicting the result of the marriage. *Mo* is kind of divination in which a lama or monk seeks power from his own deity to let him judge a future, present, or past event. Usually a lama or monk prays and unintentionally divides the beads of a rosary (normally one rosary has 108 beads) into three parts and then counts the numbers of the middle part of the rosary and judges the event according to the random numbers. Similarly, some monks or lamas also use dice to generate random numbers for predicting an event. Today, there is a dice game on cell phone machines, and a few fortunetellers use this game device for numerology or *mo*.

Many monks and lamas who own mobile phones use this game to make a numerical evaluation of potential marriage partners. Basically Tibetans have textbooks in which people can find explanations of every random number. Not all Tibetan monks or lamas know how to do *mo*. Many lamas do not want to perform *mo* for potential couples because the rate of divorce has been increasing in Tibetan areas. Therefore, lamas try to avoid making *mo* predictions for people seeking a love match. Of course, lamas complain about the local lack of trust, and they certainly know that marriage is an unpredictable matter. It is also true that the high rate of divorce threatens the validity of *mo*. Some monks and lamas are smart enough to avoid performing *mo* for a marriage because people criticize their predictions if the *mo* looked positive, but the couple later divorced. This indicates that the *mo* is an uncertain prediction, and it cannot protect marriages from tragedy. However, Tibetans cannot give up *mo* culturally or psychologically. They have pinned great hopes on *mo*, not only for marriage but also for other matters in their lives.

7.5 Predicting a Marriage: Chinese Zodiac Match

Another way to prejudge a marriage is to examine whether the perspective couple’s Chinese zodiac²⁹, (Chinese: 生肖; pinyin: shengxiao) (Tibetan: *lo res*), are compatible or not. Huarui Dongzhi 花锐东智 (2005) observed that, “As a family seeks assistance from a lama or monk to verify the Chinese zodiac of two people according to their birth years. This is basic precondition for a proposal of marriage” (p. 37). Namkhai Norbu (1983) mentioned that this tradition exists in the Gserrrta nomadic areas, and he wrote:

²⁹ There are twelve Chinese zodiac signs in Chinese astrology: mouse, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep or goat, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig.

First ask an astrologer will check to see if the Chinese zodiac of the wife-to-be conforms to that of the husband-to-be. If the Chinese zodiacs are compatible, the man's father or uncle can go to the woman's home with gifts of clothes and skills in order to propose the marriage. This is called 'make the deal' or *sna thag btags*. (p.189)

Huarui Dongzhi (2005) also pointed out that, "This [Chinese zodiac] tradition has not changed in Tibet because of the new era and technology" (p. 38). His arguments send us two messages. On the one hand, we can see how Tibetans are still deeply tied to traditional culture. On the other hand, Chinese educated or modern educated Tibetans believe that Tibetans are superstitious and backward. This Chinese cultural superiority is a big barrier for many Chinese and young Tibetans who project an idea of inequality with regard to Tibetan culture. Therefore, it is important to consider cultural relativism when we analyze Tibetan marriage customs. There are no good or bad elements in marriage customs, but there are variations among marriage traditions.

Tibetans know that marriage is unstable, but they try their best to make sure the marriage will endure. They often seek help from their religion to deal with the psychological problems associated with marriage. These divinations strongly influence individuals psychologically for a while, but not forever. The result of a divination is unverifiable, but people who live in this context or in Tibetan culture have strong beliefs in divination. Every Tibetan knows a story or myth about the truth of divination.

The situation is mostly similar in Khams, according to Suonan Caidan's blog (2009). He wrote:

Two families invite or visit a monk or astrologer to make a divination for predicting the result of the marriage. This divination, mo, will judge whether the man and woman will be happy or depressed in the future if they get married. They also ensure the Chinese zodiac of the two people's birthdates are compatible. If the divination, mo, is negative and the Chinese zodiac are not compatible, some families give up the proposed marriage and seek another candidates for their sons. But some families consult lamas to help them drive away evil spirits in order to ensure a successful marriage. In Nangqian [Tibetan: Nangchen], other families ask lamas to change the name of the woman in order to avoid an unfortunate marriage. Therefore, it is more common to change women's names for fortune marriage in Nangqian.

If there is no problem with the Chinese zodiac, the family is happy and moves forward with arranging the marriage. However, a family may give up a marriage if the result of divination is negative. Or, the family may consult a lama or monk to make "rituals" (Tibetan: *bca' ba*³⁰) to eradicate disasters and pray for well-being. After these rituals are completed, the family will choose a go-between and a date to propose the marriage. The latter choice fits for most families because their children do not give up their love easily. A family makes a final decision on marriage after both sets of parents and both children are satisfied.

³⁰ *Bca' ba* literally means correct or change.

Rural Amdobas depend on parents to arrange marriages between their children, but self-determined marriages also exist. Parents of both the bride and groom are supposed to approve marriages based on love. If it is an arranged marriage, the children of both sides have the right to accept or reject the proposal. The parents often use different methods of convincing their children to accept the proposed marriage. As discussed in the previous section, young boys and girls have to accept a close cousin marriage if their parents attempt to arrange this for the purpose of supporting elderly family members.

8.0 The Process of Arranging Marriages

There are formal and informal ways to propose a marriage in Amdo. Here, I focus on the procedure of marriage decision-making used in Rdobis Township. Not all Amdo Tibetans arrange marriages in the same way, but most agricultural regions have similar traditions. I will also provide a general outline of marriage procedures in nomadic areas. One should keep in mind that arranging marriages is a complicated matter and it cannot be reduced into a single form when people practice it in reality.

My fieldwork indicated that nomads often simplify the procedure of marriage negotiation, and that farmers create more complex alliances because they preserve traditional customs in daily life.

For the purposes of this discussion, we will assume the bridegroom's family is proposing the marriage. In reality, either the bride's or the bridegroom's family can propose a marriage. If the bride's family proposes the marriage, it is called "*mag pa* marriage" (Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, 1963), and the bridegroom will stay with his wife in her parents' home. The *mag pa* phenomenon in Blabrang community was observed by Makley (2007) and she noted, "It had become much harder for households without sons to find a man willing to take on the labor and residential requirements of marrying in and becoming a *makwa* [*mak pa*] or surrogate son" (p.213). It is wise to note that the woman's family can also propose a marriage and send a go-between to the man's home if her family hopes to take a son-in-law or *mag pa* into their family. Generally, the family initially proposes a marriage will send a go-between to the bride giver family or bridegroom giver family to propose a marriage.

8.1 Brideprice (*rgyu* or *gnyen rtags*) and Breast-feeding Price (*nu rin*)

In Amdo, most Tibetan agriculture and nomadic communities practice the tradition of brideprice, also known as bridewealth, or bride token. It is an amount of money or property or wealth paid by the groom's family to the bride's family if the groom's family proposes the marriage or if it is the bride receiver. The agreed brideprice may or may not be intended to reflect the perceived value of the bride. Tibetan peasants in Amdo call it as "wealth" or *rgyu*, and nomads call it a "marriage gift" (Tibetan: *gnyen rtags*), or "blood

and flesh price” (Tibetan: *sha rin khrag rin*), or “clothing and ornament price” (Tibetan: *gos rin rgyan rin*), etc. Traditionally, *rgyu* means domestic animals, for, in the past, 15-30 animals had to be brought to the bride’s family. Normally, peasants use the payment of a brideprice to prepare the bride’s clothing and ornaments; in many nomadic regions, the groom’s family prepares the bride’s clothing and ornaments and presents them to bride’s family when they pay the brideprice. Both peasants and nomads present the brideprice prior to the wedding ceremony because the bride will wear the clothing and ornaments during the wedding ceremony. The brideprice is negotiable, and the go-between plays a major role in fulfilling the mandates of both the groom’s family and the bride’s family.

The amount of the brideprice is varies from region to region, and the form of the brideprice also varies over time, though nowadays people prefer to pay the brideprice in cash. As Tshe-brtan-rgyal (2010) pointed out, in the past the brideprice of a wealthy family included:

A nice horse, pieces of fabrics or skills for 20-30 Tibetan robes (*gos bzo lwa*), 7-8 coral and turquoise necklaces (*ske rgyan*), a silver loop (*glo gzur [glo gzer]*) and hook (*bzho bzung [bzho zung]*), a belt (*rked bcings*), liquor and silver (*dnagul*), etc. The girl possesses the clothing and ornaments and her family keeps the horse and silver. The pieces of fabrics or silks, and liquor are given to relatives according the distance of blood tie. (p. 36)

I was also told that a portion of the brideprice is paid to the bride giver’s family to compensate them for the loss of a member of their labor force. That is why in some places in Amdo the amount of money paid for the brideprice is much lower than the bridegroom price.³¹ Locals assume that a man’s labor brings more benefit than a woman’s labor does to a family. Therefore, a family has to pay much more money to find a *mag pa* “bridegroom” in Amdo. For instance, in some nomadic areas a family may pay 10,000 RMB (around 1,000 Euros) for a *mag pa* if he will live with his wife’s family. The brideprice in the same village could be 5,000-8,000 RMB (around 500-800 Euros). A farmers’ financial situation is often worse than that of a nomad’s, and a farmer may not need to pay a very high price for a future spouse. As Dpa’-ris Sangs-rgyas confirmed:

Historically herders were richer than farmers. They easily found wives from agricultural areas, while herders hesitated to give their daughters to farmers because the daughters could not drink a cup of milk and eat butter daily if they married farmers. But now the situation is different. However, both herders and farmers present a few thousand RMB as the brideprice today in Dpa’ris region. (Interview, December 2009)

During my fieldwork in Amdo in 2010, many farmers and herders complained about inflation and the rise in the brideprice. They argued that in many places one cannot afford

³¹ Amdobas customarily say *mag pa bzhang* (literally place /find a bridegroom) and *mna’ ma blangs* (literally take a bride). But it is considered to be a shame for a man to marry into his wife’s family. In other words, if the husband stays or resides at his wife’s family, others often discriminate against him. To avoid this situation, some families arrange a special type of marriage which is *bar du bzhang* “place between.” This means that the new couple stay in their own house or tent and have obligations to both families.

to take a wife because the brideprice reaches 30,000 -50,000 RMB (around 3,000-4,000 Euros) in many cases. One of my Tibetan friends, Pad-ma, who lives in Finland, also said that recently his family in Amdo paid 30,000 RMB (around 3,000 Euros) for his younger brother's bride, who is said to be a beautiful and sweet woman from the village. He also mentioned that his village is very poor, and his family can only afford such an expensive bride because one of his elder brothers, also lives in a European country, supports his family, and wants his jobless, but college-educated brother to have a bright future with a good wife. (Interview, April 2011) Generally, today the brideprice is from 5,000 RMB to 10,000RMB (500-1000 Euros), and it varies from family to family.

In Gcantssha County, most villages demand a brideprice when they negotiate a marriage. The unique tradition in those villages is to present a number of Chinese bowls to the bride's family if both families agree to arrange the marriage. In some cases, the brideprice can be overlooked, but the gift of bowls cannot be. As Blo-brtan-rdo-rje and Stuart (2007) described the brideprice in Skyargya Village in Gcantssha County:

The groom's family provides a cash brideprice for the bride's parents and bowls for each household of the bride's kinship group when he marries. The cash brideprice amount is decided on by the bride's family and varies from family to family. (p.187)

It is said that the bride's family wishes to receive a special favorable bowl made in China, Tibetans call it '*bru brgya ma* or "hundred grains," and it costs at least 3000 RMB (around 300 Euros) if the bowl is an authentic one. Today, it is impossible to find this kind of bowl in the market, and families try to borrow them just for a marriage proposal from families that possess them. The borrower needs to buy back the bowls at a high price from the bride's family to return them to their owner after the family has symbolically presented the bowls to the bride's family.

In agricultural areas, men discuss the brideprice and the wedding ceremony during the marriage negotiation. As Mkharr-'bum mentioned, "Men will say they have finished their part and then allow the women to speak. Women request the headgear (*ral gdan*), gold ring, gold and coral and necklace for their daughters. Women decide on these things" (Interview, September 2009).

In some places, people may not pay a brideprice, but they pay a "breast-feeding price" or *nu rin*. The *nu rin* means that the man's family has to pay the cost of bearing and rearing the bride by her mother. The basic information here is that mothers produce daughters and men have to pay the mother when they take their daughters to be wives. Whether a family is poor or wealthy, farmer or nomad; a *nu rin* must be presented in all Tibetan areas. Chen Liming 陈黎明(2008) pointed out that, "Tibetans from agricultural areas usually present a colorful *pang gdan* for the *nu rin*, while it is common to award a dairy yak for *nu rin* in pastoral areas." He continued, "Sometimes the *nu rin* must still be given, even though the girl's mother passed away a long time ago." Certainly, these observations refer to Central Tibet because of the term *pang gdan*, which is a colorful

piece of woven apron that is worn over a woman's chuba (Tibetan: *phyu pa*). In Amdo, women do not wear this traditional Tibetan woman's apron. The useful information from the observers is that it confirms that all Tibetans practice some form of *nu rin*.

One of my interviewees from the Kokonor region, Gu-ru-'tsho, said:

We do not have to present 'brideprice' or *rgyu*, that is a 'peasant's custom' (Tibetan: *rong ba'I srol*). We only practice 'breast-feeding price' or *nu rin*. Today people give some money but not much for *nu rin*. In the past people gave a female yak. (Interview, November 2009)

Tshe-brtan-rgyal (2010) mentioned that *Mgologpas* present a horse for the breast-feeding price or *ma sor* in local term (p.132). An artist, Mgo-log Zla-bhe, told me that, in Mgolog, Tibetans do not pay a brideprice:

In my home in Mgolog, the only marriage gift that will be presented to the girl's family is a *kha btags* and a bottle of liquor when the go-between proposes marriage. The family does not need to pay the brideprice. We assume that we cannot sell a person, so it is crucial to avoid this practice. (Interview, August 2009).

Another *Mgologpa* (resident of Golok) from Padma County, 'Jam-dbyangs-blo-gros, stated that, "In some Golok areas, people have to present a bottle of liquor and a *kha btags*, but not brideprice when the go-between proposes a marriage" (Interview, August 2009). However, he said that this tradition does not exist in his own home, in Padma County. He stated:

There is no marriage gift at all. Even *kha btags* and a bottle of liquor do not exist, but there is a tradition for the marriage proposal. The boy's father visits the girl's family and he straightly expresses the point, "our son and your daughter have been engaged and we agree with their relationship. What do you think about it?" If the other family agrees, everything is done. (Interview, August 2009)

To clarify how locals are confused and frustrated by the brideprice in Amdo, I am going to describe a marriage story, which happened in 2005. A man from Golok wanted to marry a *rong mo*, a woman or a girl from an agricultural area, from *Mangra* (Chinese: 贵南; pinyin: Guinan). According to their tradition, the girl's parents wanted to receive a brideprice. But the man's family was disappointed and strongly rejected their request or demand. The man's family swore to revoke this marriage if the other family insisted on the payment. The man and woman loved each other and did not abandon the idea of getting married. As matter of tradition, the family's permission is essential for the marriage, and no marriage can take place without the agreement of both families. The Golok man thought it was not a big deal to offer money if the bride's family wanted it, but his family fought hard and argued that they had their tradition and they were not willing to buy a bride. The groom's family said the girl's family also should respect their family's tradition. The fight was endless. At some point the girl's mother finally met the man and persuaded him to pay the brideprice secretly. Finally, the man made a deal with his bride's family without telling the story to his own family.

This story is a good example for showing that, in Amdo, different villages have local traditions and that it is sometimes hard to solve cultural conflicts easily and publicly. We cannot assume that all Tibetans think and act exactly the same way. It is misleading when Tibetan traditions are presented in a stereotyped way.

As a historical tradition, many farmers and nomads in Amdo have kept the brideprice or *rgyu*, though the form of payment has changed over time. In the past, people gave animals or other forms of property rather than cash, which is the dominant form of payment today. All Tibetans participate in the practice of giving a breast-feeding price or *nu rin*, and there are many different local names for it, including *nu rin* and *ma sor* for it. In addition to the *nu rin* and the *rgyu*, another tradition is to give a horse for the bride's *a-zhang* (*zhang rta*), a horse for the bride's brother (*ming rta*) and a yak for the go-between, and so on. Today, Amdobas symbolically present various gifts to all guests who accompany the bride when the family arranges the wedding. The bridegroom's family, or in some cases both sides of families, also offer some money to the go-between.

8.2 Dowry or *Rzongs Ba*

A dowry is the money, goods, or estate that a woman brings to her husband or his parents' home when they get married. Giving a dowry is a common practice in many regions of Amdo. They call it "a share or gift to a bride" (*bag bskal* or *bag rdzongs*). Brides in Amdo do not always have to have a dowry, and it is based on the voluntary consideration of the bride's family. It is also true that the dowry is not discussed during a marriage bargain. The most families provide some forms of dowry for their daughters in Amdo in order to establish a status for her with her husband's family. Some Tibetans also argue that a dowry may help the bride and her husband to start a better life. Farmers often offer pieces of fabric and silks, clothing, jewelry, and grain on the wedding day. Displaying the dowry in the courtyard of the groom's family on the wedding day is very popular amongs agriculture peasants in Rebgong, Rdobis, and Dp'aris, and this show determines the reputation of the bride's family and of the bride herself. The dowry is collected by the new couple when they visit the bride's family sometime after the wedding. In other nomadic and agricultural areas, the bride leaves for her parents' home immediately after the wedding ceremony, and she will bring her dowry when her father accompanies her to return to her husband's family. There is no fixed period how long she can stay her parents' home after the wedding. Normally, the two families make an agreement during the wedding about how long she will stay at her natal home after the wedding. She often receives an equal share of her parents' property according to her natal family's economic situation, and her relatives provide some animals (horse, yak, sheep) or other kinds of goods. Some farmers even give the bride a small piece of land as a dowry. The new couple is then obligated to present a gift or cash when the bridegroom or bride's siblings or relatives get married. The gift is often reciprocal, and one needs to

return it someday. The bride will receive her share from her family in Golok and in other nomadic areas. For instance, the bride's parents have five family members (including everyone in the family), 100 yaks, and 300 sheep. The bride gets 20 yaks and 60 sheep as a dowry, and she brings these to her husband or his family.

In the case of divorce, the bride may not get back all of these animals from her husband if her husband's family is poorer than her own. She will only get back 10 yaks and 20 sheep if her husband's family has five people, 50 yaks, and 100 sheep. That is why, in the past, rich families made a prenuptial agreement in order to protect their properties. Most dowries today are cash, and the parents give a certain amount of money to the bride according to their economic condition. The bridegroom or his family cannot complain about the dowry if the parents of the bride do not voluntarily offer a dowry for her. Nevertheless, nomads often provide something to the bride when she returns for the first time to her parents' home after her marriage. The bride's family gets a bad reputation if the family does not give a share of animals or property when their daughter gets married. As Rinzin Thargyal (2007) pointed out:

Daughters customarily left their natal home and joined their husbands, but both the quality and quantity of their dowries depended upon the wealth of their parents and the kind of marriage they had contracted. If a daughter complied with the wishes of her parents, and married the man or men of her parents' choice, she invariably received a bigger dowry than her sister who, perhaps, found a husband on her own and started a household with him. (p.139)

In contrast, some farmers ignore the dowry if the bride's family does not present it during a wedding. It seems that the dowry and brideprice comprise the balance in agricultural areas. Many people assume that a family may spend all of the brideprice on purchasing clothing and jewelry for the bride, especially to prepare a *ral gdan* for a bride in some agricultural regions. Parents invest much of their money and energy in making their children's marriage, but divorce is unavoidable for many couples, and this drama can be found in every village in Amdo, and elsewhere in the many corners of the world. One of my Irish friends informed me that divorce was not legal in Ireland until 1997. In Tibet, especially in Amdo, a go-between has a lot of task to handle when a family wants to propose a marriage or end it.

8.3 Go-between or Bar ba

After the family selects a potential bride, they choose a propitious date on which to send a matchmaker, the *bar ba*, to the bride's family. *Bar ba* is the Tibetan term for go-between, and the original meaning of this term is broker (Bsam-gtan, 2006, p. 519). A go-between and a broker have the same goal, which is to persuade others to do something by using their negotiation skills. Usually the matchmaker is an experienced male from the groom's village, and he plays major role in negotiating a marriage. As Dkon-mchog-chos-'phel pointed out:

The matchmaker should be a friend or relative who has good skills in speech and knows the bride's family. He should also be a person who can tolerate aggression. The father [of the groom] does not fit the role of matchmaker because he directly faces the bride's family, which requires a guarantor in marriage. This is similar to a bank asking you to have a guarantor when you borrow money. (Interview, October 2010)

Traditionally, a Tibetan marriage was hard to arrange without a matchmaker, and in many cities today, modern, and more educated, couples still need matchmakers when they arrange their marriages. But Ma Rong (2008) argued that:

The effect of "professional matchmakers" disappeared in Lhasa since the 1960s but kept active in rural areas (5.8%). Because of low density, smaller population size of villages and distance between villages, the matchmakers traveling among villages played a role in marriage in rural areas. (p. 222)

Ma Rong (2008) also analyzed the matchmaker's gender and function in different marriages:

A "professional matchmaker" may play a quite different role in the "parents decided" marriages and "self-decided" marriages. In the first case, she may have a definite role and function, while in the second case she may function just as an "introducer." (p.224)

So-ba Sprang-thar-rgya-mtsho (2009) affirmed that there are only male matchmakers, but not female matchmakers in Tibet (p. 9). It is fair to say that a woman can initiate a marriage, but her task is limited to inquiring about the reaction of a bride or bride's family regarding a marriage. For instance, a woman can visit and inform the bride or her family of the marriage plan of the bridegroom's family and try to win over the bride's or her family's acceptance. This woman somehow may have to persuade the bride or her family many times before the bridegroom's family sends a male matchmaker. Some villagers believe that the woman is an informal matchmaker, and they use the same term *bar ba* for her. In fact, she is not the real matchmaker for a marriage because she cannot negotiate the marriage between two families. Her main task is to do a favor for the bridegroom's family, and her function is that of "introducer" but not a matchmaker or *bar ba* according to local social norms.

A good matchmaker also should be a knowledgeable person who is a master of local traditions and who is familiar with local cultural environment/context. In Rdobis, it is not wise to select close relatives as go-betweens, but in some nomadic areas even the father of the groom can play this role. The go-between should be from the same village, and he should at least be a distant relative or friend. It is an additional asset to be a friend, relative, or schoolmate of the bride's parents. At the very least, the matchmaker should have some connection to the bride's family and should be an acquaintance of the bride's father. Using a relative of the bride's family as a matchmaker helps the family to save face. If a stranger tries to propose a marriage to a family, the family might get angry and refuse the marriage immediately. Sometimes a family will not even allow a matchmaker

to enter the house if a stranger is sent to propose a marriage. Therefore, it is important for the go-between to have good connections with the family. A go-between can bring an assistant with him to help persuade the potential bride's parents. In many cases, an assistant might come along because of his singing ability. A local scholar, Skäl-bzang-nor-bu, put it this way:

A go-between should be a good speaker and the assisting person should be a person who can drink liquor and sing songs. A female villager may stop them on the way back. The assistant can sing a song to the female villagers so that they let the go-between and assistant pass. (Interview, September 2009)

In Padma County, Golok, only the groom's family can arrange a marriage. Generally, the groom's father goes to the bride's family for that purpose. If the groom does not have a father, then his uncle *a-khu* "father's brother," *a-zhang* "mother's brother," *spun* "his own brother," or one of his male relatives is given the task. In this region there is no case of a man residing with his wife's family. That is the reason why only the man's family can propose a marriage. It would create conflict if someone asked a family to send its son to live with his wife's family. Having carried out fieldwork in that region, I can confirm that in other places in Golok, the tradition is similar to those in the rest of the Amdo regions.

As a Chinese researcher, Chen Liming, (2008) pointed out:

A family member does not become a go-between, but often a relative of the groom or experienced man from the village can be the matchmaker. However, the parents of two families can discuss the marriage directly if two families have good relations and if the couple is already engaged.

An article on a Chinese travel business Web site says, "In some places of Gannan [Kanlho], parents of a male select a good friend of the girl's family to become the go-between. Usually they choose an older man from the village or the girl's uncle."³² There is no doubt about who will choose the *bar ba*, though who will be the *bar ba* depends on the local customs. Parents carefully select a go-between (in some nomadic areas in Amdo the bridegroom's father can be the go-between and herders often send two go-betweens) and a lucky date for proposing a marriage.

Tibetans love to choose odd numbers such the 3rd, 5th, 11th, 15th, and 21st of each lunar month for the marriage proposal date or wedding as well as for other religious practices. Tibetans believe in three Jewels³³, the Five Buddhas and the Twenty-one Taras, and so on. Huarui Dongzhi (2005) emphasized that Tibetans assume that odd numbers are lucky numbers. The 1st and 3rd of every lunar month are good days, and they are odd

³² Retrived in July 2008 from: <http://www.2008ly.com/zxny.php?id=12344> (Thie website is no longer available.)

³³ Buddha, dharma, and sangha.

numbers. Normally Tibetans do not choose even numbers when choosing a date for marriage (p. 40).

In contrast, Chinese people often pick even numbers when they arrange a wedding because they think marriage is for two people, and even numbers can be divided by two. The Chinese have very symbolic imaginations. However, Tibetans mostly follow their religious instructions and often consult a lama, monk, or astrologer to select a propitious day. Parents of the bridegroom will send a go-between with a bottle of liquor and a *kha btags* (kha-dak) to the bride's family on a favorable day, chosen by astrologer. The following process of marriage proposal is concluded from my fieldwork in Rdobis and other resources on Tibetan marriage in algriculutre areas.

8.4 Initiating a Marriage Proposal (First Visit)

The go-between tries to initiate an alliance at his first visit to the woman's family. Normally, after the groom's parents have found an eligible bride, or if the couple has already met and has been approved by the groom's family, the man's family sends a go-between to negotiate with the woman's family. The go-between and his assistant (if he needs one) take a bottle of liquor and a khadak or *kha btags* with them when going to visit the bride's family after breakfast. In the past, locals did not have glass bottles for liquor, they used clay pots instead. Prior to glass bottles, in recent times, people filled plastic buckets with homemade liquor. In the old days, ordinary people could not get a *kha btags*, and they simply tied white wool to the neck of a bottle. Today, everyone can buy a *kha btags* and tie it on the neck of the bottle. Recently people have been required to present well-packaged Chinese liquor (usually a bottle in a luxury box) and a fine *kha btags*.

After the go-between arrives at the bride's family, he simply says that he has come to discuss something (or do something or deal with something) if the girl's family does not have any idea about the reason for his visit. Usually, the go-between is an acquaintance of the family and they do not send him away. Therefore, he will be invited into the house, and he will be offered a cup of tea.

After the initial niceties, the matchmaker declares the purpose of his visit. He will begin to introduce the family and the future son-in-law or *mag pa*. He also mentions that the performance of divination has confirmed this marriage will be a reasonable and happy/good one. Moreover, he emphasizes that the daughter of this family is the most suitable candidate for the groom. The woman's family responds to him immediately if the woman is already engaged to another man or if the family desires to find a *mag pa* ("son-in-law") rather than give the daughter away. A family may not give the daughter away because they believe that the daughter is a reincarnation of their grandfather or grandmother and the family hopes she never leaves the family and village.

As a tradition, a family does not directly reject a marriage proposal, but it will insist the go-between to take back his gifts, and this is a signal that there is no hope for the marriage. This is a polite way to reject the proposed marriage. But the go-between can visit the woman's family again and will try again to convince her parents a second time or even several times.

If the woman's family accepts the marriage proposal, the family accepts the go-between's gifts and later makes another appointment to discuss the marriage in detail. Some families may allow the go-between to leave the bottle of liquor even if they are not ready to make an immediate decision about the marriage. The parents often need to discuss the proposed marriage with their relatives: mother's brother, father's brother and grandfather (Tibetan: *a-zhang*, *a-khu*, *a-sbo'u/a-myes*), and other close relatives in the same confederation or *tsho ba*. The woman's family consults her mother's brother, and he only offers his idea about marriage rather than a decision because the woman's parents make the final decision after they consult other relatives. As Dkod-mchog-chos-'phel states:

In every step of the marriage negotiation, the matchmaker has to give a gift or share to *ma zhang* or mother's brother if he cannot come to meet the matchmaker. The reason is that he is from a different confederation or group because his sister married into her husband's confederation. It is tradition to know *ma zhang*'s idea about the marriage, but the real decision-making power is in the hands of the woman's parents. (Interview, October 2010)

The woman's family also has to ask the potential bride how she feels about the proposed marriage. It is essential to find out how willing the woman is to be married to the groom before the family makes a big decision or mistake. However, the go-between should be happy because he has achieved half of his goal if he manages to leave the bottle of liquor and the *kha btags* with the family. It is an important sign that the family is at least willing to consider the marriage. Back at the groom's family house, the groom's family has been worrying about the marriage negotiation. The parents make milk tea and nervously wait for the go-between's arrival. Locals think that the go-between's smile is an essential sign for good news when he returns to the man's family, and the family members feel happy when they see this smile. In Grotshang, if the woman's family has accepted the proposal, they will drink the liquor, which was brought by the go-between. After they drink it, they put few grains of barley in the empty bottle, and send the bottle to the groom's family with the go-between.

8.5 To "Statement Drink" or *Tshigs Chang*, and to Negotiate Brideprice or *Rgyu* (The Second Visit and/or Third Visit)

After the woman's parents have discussed the proposed marriage with their relatives, especially the woman's uncles (Tibetan: *a-khu* and *a-zhang*) the parents make an appointment on an auspicious day with the go-between to offer an answer to the proposed

marriage. If the woman's family accepts the proposal, the family offers a "statement drink" or *tshigs chang* to celebrate. This often occurs at the go-between's third visit. At that time, the man's family has to provide liquor and cigarettes for the celebration, even though the man's family does not join this celebration. If the two families know each other, the woman's family can arrange *tshigs chang* during the second visit and skip a third visit to save time and energy. The third visit takes place after the woman's family offers a positive answer during the second visit.

One of the items that must be negotiated is the "bridewealth or brideprice" (Tibetan: *rgyu*). This *rgyu* does not include the bride's clothes and jewelry, but the go-between must negotiate these things during his second visit. So-ba Sprang-thar-rgya-mtsho (2009) mentioned that it is not only about number of clothing items given to the bride but also the quality of the clothing. The family also requests that the man's family provide a certain quantity of liquor and cigarettes for the *tshigs chang* celebration during the third visit. The villagers often know what things and how many of them are brought by the go-between when he visits the bride's family every time. For instance, in Grotshang, the local tradition is to bring one or two bottles of liquor, 10 fried loaves of bread, 1 pack of butter, and 1 pack of brick tea when the go-between visits the bride's family a second time (p. 17). The go-between brings the positive or negative answer from the woman's family to the man's family when his second visit ends. The man's family has to send the go-between back a third time to negotiate *rgyu* and other issues with the woman's family if the man's family received positive answer from its potential alliance.

During the go-between's third visit, the bride's family organizes a small banquet for all relatives including *a-khu*, *a-zhang* and other close relatives. There is a custom of bringing a few gifts for absent relatives when the go-between visits the third time. The gifts vary from family to family. Traditionally they offer short pieces of fabric or cloth. Today, people can purchase many fine things from the market or shops. The go-between hands over the gifts to the bride's family when he arrives.

After the go-between's arrival, *a-sbo'u/a-myes* "grandfather" (in Rdobis Township and other some agricultural areas) or elder *a-khu* (father's elder brother) opens the bottle of liquor, which was presented by the go-between during the first visit. The person who opens the bottle gives a short congratulatory speech and uses his ring finger to offer the liquor to the Three Jewels three times. After this ritual, he drinks a cup of liquor, and then other family members drink a cup of liquor one by one starting with the oldest family member and ending with the youngest. Here family members mean men, for women are excluded from this formal negotiation and celebration except in that they serve food and tea to the dominant members of the family who "exercise control" or "make decisions," in Fox's words (2003, p. 31).

While this is going on, the family and the go-between begin to discuss the year and date of the wedding. They also negotiate the brideprice or *rgyu*. Many peasants normally pay a brideprice prior to marriage because the bride's family has to prepare clothing and

ornaments for her. Both the bride's family and the groom's family negotiate the brideprice. A Tibetan folklorist, Mkharr-'bum, observed:

There is a symbolic brideprice in our village. This is small. Today we do not need a *ral gdan*, so there is no cost for girl's family in Xunhua [Rdobis]. I assume that Hualong [Bayan] and Hainan [Mtsholho] people still need to prepare a *ral gdan* prior to marriage. It costs a lot. It is about 30,000 RMB [around 3,000 Euros]. In a poor village, it is a lot. If a family says we discuss the marriage after you complete a *ral gdan*, it is a difficult task for a family. No family can complete it. Some families have to wait for three to four years because of the *ral gdan*. We changed this tradition after 1958. Now we do not need it. (Interview, September 2009)

8.6 Brideprice Payment or *Rgyu'ded*³⁴ (Fourth Visit)

The fourth visit is called "collecting the gifts" (Tibetan: *rgyu 'ded*). Historically, if you did not have gift to bring, you had to borrow from others. You also needed to pay silver (or *dingul*). The groom should ride a fine horse and carry a gun on his back. *Rgyu mgo rta* and *rgyu rnga bo'u*, it means 'the horse is symbol of the best of animals and the gun represent the protection of the *rgyu*.'

The groom's companions bring food, 20 kilo to 50 kilos of liquor and other items. The bride's family also makes tea and cooks meat and other foods. All the males from the village gather together for a feast. On that day, the matchmaker announces *zhang mdzad gnyen po*, 'the establishment of the tie between the group that gives a wife and the group that receives a wife' and hands over the *rgyu* – gifts, animals, liquor, cash or silver – to the "woman giver" or *a-zhang tshang*. The bride's family will give back some amount of money to the bridegroom. For instance, if they give 1,000 RMB (around 100 Euros) to the bride's family, the family may give back 400 or 200 RMB (40 or 20 Euros) to the bridegroom. The amount given back often depends on the family. It should be noted that in some places the groom's family pays the brideprice during the wedding when the *a-zhang tshang* comes to the groom's family. The price can be lowered if the matchmaker is a good negotiator.

The groom should show respect to the *a-zhang tshang* and stands at the end of the guest row during the fourth visit. The bridegroom has to stand all the time during this visit. He is required to prostrate towards the elder people when they give congratulatory speeches or just say a few congratulatory words. The bridegroom and the go-between have to present some gifts (often money) to other village groups such as to the village temple or the *ma ni* house in order to gain a good reputation and to show positive virtue. In many agricultural areas, the groom accompanies the go-between to visit the bride's family when his family presents the brideprice to the bride's family and the day the bride is invited to the wedding ceremony.

³⁴ *Rgyu 'ded*, literally, it means drive livestock because traditionally, Tibetans gave domestic animals as brideprice and locals still use the same term to call the payment, although it could be cash today.

The matchmaker must handle many tasks and should tell the *a-zhang tshang* which things or animals are borrowed from other families and make sure the bride's family gives them back to the groom's family. The matchmaker must be a skillful man and find ways to bring back all of the borrowed things.

To save the face of the bride's family, you have to present more animals, but you have to get back half of them on the same day. Today, even if you present money or cash, you may pay 10,000 RMB as the brideprice, but the matchmaker has to get back half of it. There are many things to handle, but it is not just a question of giving everything to the bride's family. The groom's family also can guess how much the bride's family will keep and how much they will return. However, old men from the village will mediate and convince the bride's family to return some of the *rgyu* according to tradition if the groom's family loses everything on that day. The bride's family asks an old man from the village to give back the animals or cash with a *kha btags* the final decision regarding *rgyu*. This man expresses good wishes and congratulations (*kha g.yang bkra shis 'bod*). This is a task for the older men. Usually, during the third meal of the day (the bride's family serves foods several times this day) the bride family gives back to the groom some part of the *rgyu* is made. The groom and his companions have to prostrate toward the old man who gives a speech and hands over some *rgyu* to the groom. How many *rgyu* the groom gets back depends on the matchmaker's ability and skill. (Dkon-mchog-chos-phel, Interview, October 2010)

The aforementioned description of *rgyu 'ded* in Rdobis Township, in the past and present time, indicates the process of exchanging goods and women among Tibetan villagers. Today villagers still maintain most of this tradition, though they try to skip several parts of the rituals.

In pastoral areas, in the most cases, the groom does not visit the bride's family before their wedding, and the bride's family will not give back any money from the brideprice, if a brideprice has been paid. The bride's family will give her a share of the family property to groom's family after the wedding.

Not all Amdobas practice the aforementioned scenarios in the same way. Most Amdobas, whether farmers or nomads, will have one or two visits in order to complete the marriage arrangement. According to So-ba Sprang-thar-rgya-mtsho's (2009) description of the trend of marriage proposing in the Grotshang tribe, the procedures have been reduced, and many traditions have already disappeared. Some marriage customs remain among the locals, but only a few people can understand the symbolic meanings of the surviving rituals. Today it is common for many families to combine the second and third visits into one. Some families do everything at once instead of carrying out the four visits (p.19). My fieldwork confirmed this and found that many people tend to simplify the rituals and procedures of marriage negotiation in order to save time and travel.

Nomads often decide on whether a marriage will take place on the first or second visit. In contrast, families in agricultural areas, where the villagers live close to each other geographically and socially have complicated relationships. Therefore, they need to find a good matchmaker and make many trips to negotiate a marriage with another family. As

Mkhar-'bum observed, "The go-betweens have to make at least three visits in agricultural areas" (Interview, September 2009).

Sometimes a proposed marriage is refused because of the family protector, *rus pa* "flesh and bone" issues, and personality. The marriage might also be denied if the woman has been promised to another man. However, all Amdobas arrange a wedding ceremony if both the bridegroom's and the bride's families accept a marriage proposal. It is necessary to discuss the unique forms of marriage proposal in Amdo before describing a typical wedding ceremony, because many outsiders are fascinated by the tradition of "bride kidnapping" in Tibet. Other people often think that Tibet is an exotic place where an old nation practices strange marriage customs: polyandry and bride-kidnapping.

8.7 Bride Capture or Kidnapping the Bride

One cannot steal the yak of a poor family, but one can kidnap the girl of a wealthy family.

Tibetan saying

It is crucial to understand that what looks like an informal, even "unethical" or "illegal" approach in some cultures actually converts into a formal marriage proposal. Many Chinese people often assume that this symbolic bride capture in Tibet is evidence of an ancient tribal custom that women are kidnapped from other tribes forcefully. Similarly, Fox (2003) mentioned:

Thus the Scottish lawyer McLennan felt that the symbolic bride capture found in ancient Rome was a "survivor" of an earlier tribal stage in which men had indeed forcibly abducted women from other tribes. He went on from this discovery to elaborate a series of stages through which the customs of kinship and marriage of all mankind had passed. (p. 17)

Many Chinese scholars' views agree with McLennan's conclusion because they also claim that polyandrous and polygamous marriages are "residual" phenomena of group marriages through which mankind developed monogamy (Wu Congzhong, 1991, p. 493; and Ou Chaoquan, 1988, p. 83). Fox (2003) was critical of these assumptions and argued that, "The speculations of some of these early evolutionists now appear very naive. The data they used was poor, and their conclusions about the 'history of mankind' quite staggeringly without foundation" (p. 18). Today anthropologists certainly reject the notion of unilinear or universal evolution, and they believe that different groups have developed their own customs, thereby making the evolution of marriage systems multilineal. Therefore, cultures or traditions cannot be ranked as higher or lower, better or worse; they just have different ways of doing things. As Fox (2003) concluded:

The evolutionists failed to see that the *whole* of mankind need not have gone through the *same* series of stages – that there were alternative possible routes. Because they insisted on universal evolution, they regarded any contemporary tribe that showed 'archaic' traits as somehow retarded – as kind of fossil. (p.18)

It is clear that the practice of bride capture in Amdo is a symbolic and alternative way of arranging a marriage, but this is not the only way to arrange a marriage. The informal way of initiating marriage is called “taking a bride” or “kidnapping a bride” (Tibetan: *mna’ ma khyid* or *khrid dang*). Some places in Amdo called this initiative a “gray area woman” (Tibetan: *gro mo*); it is difficult to determine the original meaning of this term, but we may interpret it as the role of the girl is between a girl and a wife. In other word, she is neither a girl nor a wife. She is not a girl because someone already took her, but she is not a wife or bride because her parents have not approved the marriage. Other Tibetan scholars believe that this term should be written as *bros mo* in Tibetan, s and it means “escaped woman.”

The fundamental basis for this process begins when a couple identifies themselves as such, and, at minimum, expresses the desire to live together. This occurs when either the woman’s parents oppose the marriage, or if the bridegroom assumes the woman’s parents will oppose the marriage. This most often occurs when the man has a *sha rus pa* or “bone” issue. As I mentioned before, a man with a bone issue cannot solve the problem by kidnapping a bride. It is very difficult to convince the bride’s family if the bridegroom has a bone issue. It is said that the only way to for the groom to avoid a conflict and marry the woman is to elope. Of course, not all couples that elope have bone issues. Without the bone issue and under other aforementioned conditions a man may become a bit more creative in his attempts to marry his desired bride.

I will compare the bride capture tradition in two regions, in agricultural areas and in pastoral areas, to present a general picture of this practice in Amdo. In Rdobis Township, with regard to the primary condition for this case, we should assume that the man is not the woman’s boyfriend or lover. There is no doubt that the process for all kinds of bride capture probably occurs in a similar way in other villages in Amdo. In this scenario, the bridegroom and some of his friends plan to steal the bride at night. If she is from another village, the bridegroom and his friends need to find a “spy” (or *nang ma*, literally means an insider) who is from the bride’s village. The insider lures the bride to some place such as her friend’s family or house according to bridegroom’s plan. The insider makes an appointment with the bridegroom and his companions to meet them in his village. The bridegroom and his friends kidnap the bride and take her to the bridegroom’s family. That is why Tibetans refer to it as “leading a bride”

Mkhar-‘bum observed:

We do not agree that the woman is captured. She is taken under certain circumstances. The woman may know about the event in advance or may not. It is different from the Chinese idea of so-called marriage by capture. In a Chinese grabbed marriage, robber or bandit gangs snatch a woman from an unfamiliar village. This is a marriage by capture. Based on this concept, Chinese think that it is a grabbed marriage when we talk about taking a woman from her home at night. (Interview, September 2009)

Chinese people are often surprised at Tibetan culture and customs, in particular, when they observe or hear rumors of unique Tibetan customs that are different from their own. Chinese often assume that Tibetan culture is backward and represents the character of “archaic” culture, which is lost in their own culture. They also believe that advanced Chinese culture and civilized Chinese can help the so-called barbaric Tibetans become more civilized. As Dan Xiuying (2008) pointed out:

Other people assume that there are kidnapping bride customs in many Tibetan areas. Nowadays the grabbed marriage has lost its original predatory nature. It has become an informal marriage proposal. It reflects the unique and typical side of Tibetan marriage custom.

Tibetan farmers and herders still practice traditional marriage customs, though younger, educated Tibetans feel that these customs are old and strange. A few Tibetan writers try to record local traditions including marriage customs, without offering any comment on them. Sanmucai (2006) described the “kidnapped bride” situation in the Bongstag tribe:

Normally young men and women have the right to seek their soul mates when they reach 13 years old. A marriage is not arranged by parents, but the parents need to be consulted. The kidnapped marriage occurs if a woman does not want to consult her parents and prefers to make the marriage decision by herself. She discloses her plan to her female friends, and they meet her at the decided time and place to secretly prepare sending her to the bridegroom’s home. This is the beginning of the so-called kidnapped marriage. Basically the kidnapping of a bride occurs at night. The bride’s female friends secretly lead her away from her parents’ tent and bring her to the bridegroom and his companions who come to pick her up. The team often brings a horse and new clothes for the bride. They will secretly put her old clothes on her couch in the tent. They also hang a white *kha btags* on the door pull rope. This means the bridegroom has apologized, and a marriage is proposed. Traditionally the bride’s family cannot provoke violence or take the case to court, although this does occasionally happen if the “kidnapped” bride comes from a wealthy or influential family. The bride’s parents have the right to accept or reject the marriage the next day when they receive a go-between who is sent by bridegroom’s family. (pp. 190-191)

Even before proceeding with this kind of marriage, Tibetans have to investigate the bone issue and the background of the woman so that the man does not end up marrying a woman who turns out to be a bad fit. For instance, a man may not target a woman whose family completely disagrees with their marriage or if a woman who does not know the man at all.

On the morning following the bride capture, the bridegroom’s family has to send two men to the bride’s family in order for the groom’s family to escape from violence or family conflict. Otherwise, the girl’s family may organize their relatives and villagers to take actions against the bridegroom’s family. Therefore, it is crucial to navigate and avoid a conflict after taking a bride. Locals refer to it “troop dissuaders” (Skal Bzang Nor Bu and Stuart, 1996, p. 443) (Tibetan: *dmag gnon* or *dmag ‘gog*). Ideally, the two representatives from the groom’s family should set out in time to arrive at the bride’s family before sunrise. Locals believe that it is dangerous if the bride’s family has

discussed the incident with relatives or has made a concrete decision to retaliate against the groom's family before discussing the situation with the designated mediator.

The bride's family risks humiliation and/or loss of face if it does not receive the mediators on the first day following the bride capture. For this reason, it is important for the mediators to arrive at the bride's home before her family has had time to organize an attack in order to save face. The two mediators' task is difficult if the bride's family has already assembled its relatives and is ready to take revenge. It is the bride's family's responsibility to provide the mediators with gifts such as a bottle of liquor and a *kha btags* in order to avoid feud. If the bride's family has no desire to agree with the marriage at all, the family will not allow the mediators to enter the house or tent, and they will request the mediators to bring the girl back to her family immediately. The mediators have to negotiate carefully because the family will not accept the gifts and may threaten to take revenge.

If the bride's family requests the return of their daughter, the mediators must bring the woman back on the same day. Although the woman is returned to her family, the bridegroom's family seeks favor from the bride's friends (including her family's friends) or relatives from the bridegroom's village to convince the bride to marry the bridegroom. While the bride is at the bridegroom's residence, she gets to know his family briefly, and she can make a decision on her own about whether she wants to marry the bridegroom. If she agrees with the marriage, the bridegroom's family sends her back to her family on the same day. After the bride arrives home, she will run away and return to the bridegroom's family. If this happens, the bride's family thinks that it is her destiny and decision. The family finally accepts this marriage because it assumes that this is their daughter's *karma*, and she chooses the road, which may bring her happiness. 'Brug mo skyid et al. (2010) provided one case study, "Lha mo might have to run to Don 'grub's home two or three times to express her sincere love for him before her family agrees" (p.186). The groom's family can also formally propose a marriage several days after the bride is sent back to her home if it is evident that the couple is in love. In this case, the two families follow a formal marriage arrangement process. 'Brug mo skyid et al. (2010) mentioned that in Stag rig Village, "The matchmakers generally visit Lha mo's family three times to before the family gives final consent" (p.187). The groom's family has to drop the marriage proposal if the bride's family does not want to make affinity with it and the two young people also do not have any relationship.

A Tibetan blog writer, Xiangji zhuoma 祥吉卓玛, described a marriage by capture among nomadic herders who are living around Kokonor or Blue Lake in Amdo. She observed that her uncle arranged his marriage through a bride capture.

Xiangji zhuoma (2009) wrote on the Qinghai Lake Web site:

If a man and a woman want to get married, but the woman's family does not agree, the man can steal the bride with his friends' help and they hang a *kha btags* on the door to indicate that bride has been stolen. The next day the bridegroom's family will formally propose marriage. If the

other family accepts the proposal and everything goes smoothly, a wedding ceremony will be held at the same day.

In Rmachu, a man is traditionally not allowed to bring the stolen woman to his natal home; he must instead bring her to the home of the chieftain or another powerful family. Skar-kho, a herder from Rmachu County, explained:

Neither the woman's family nor the man's family know about the accident, and the man should bring the woman to a family which may have his good reputation in the group so that both families of the man and woman will listen to a words. He should probably bring her to the home of a local leader or powerful person. This family will send a person with a gift to the woman's family to explain the situation and advise the family to negotiate a marriage with the man's family. Usually the woman's family accepts the suggestions because the mediator is sent by a powerful family. If the two families agree with the marriage, then they need to make another agreement about the marital residence of the new couple. Then other procedures are carried out in the formal way. (Interview, August 2010)

This practice exists among many Amdo peasants and herders. However, the bridegroom will not be successful if neither the bride's family wants the marriage nor the bride takes action to support the marriage. The bridegroom's family can avoid conflict because of the two mediators, and they may also make a marriage deal. The two families will follow all or some of the formal marriage routines as described above if the bride's family agrees to the marriage or the bride makes a decision to run away from her family. Both families have to arrange a wedding ceremony after they agree to the terms of the marriage.

9.0 Betrothal

The wedding is a kind of a public announcement of the marriage because Amdobas did not issue marriage certificates until the Chinese introduced them in the 1950s and 1960s. Many Tibetans do not register their marriages at government offices, and a wedding ceremony can legalize a marriage traditionally. A wedding ceremony is arranged by the bridegroom's family, if the bride is expected to move in with him. The marriage is arranged by the bride's family when the groom will be living with them. The new couple can live together after the wedding ceremony without social criticism even though they may not have a marriage certificate. The marriage is valid in the eyes of the community members after the family arranges the wedding ceremony.

Recently, state bureaucratic power in Tibetan areas has threatened the traditional way of recognizing marriage, and the government has required all new couples to register when they get married. Moreover, the couples that do not register their marriages have a hard time getting birth certificates for their children. Jin Jing 金晶 (2009) conducted research about family and marriage in four nomadic settlement points in the Rmachu and Kluchu counties of Kanlho Prefecture in Gansu Province, and the result of Jin Jing's research shows that 65.9% of respondents did not register their marriages, and only

34.1% of respondents registered their marriages (p. 163). These statistics confirm that the norms of traditional marriage still play a major role when local people try to arrange a marriage. It still appears that many couples in remote areas do not register their marriages because of their ages or because of the distance they are required to travel in order to do so. According to the marriage laws of 1980, men must be 20 years old in order to marry, and women must be at least 18 years old. Even with laws requiring a minimum age, many families arrange marriages for their children while the children are very young. Jin Jing (2009) found three cases of marriage of children under 14 years of age in Kanlho (p.163).

9.1 Ideal Wedding Date

For practical reasons, many Amdobas arrange weddings during the winter. The first and most important reason is that people have more free time than they do in other seasons. Farmers complete their harvests in autumn, and they have leisure time in winter. Herders also relax in the winter after their busy summer and autumn seasons. Nomadic women have less work in the winter because yaks produce less milk. Tshe-dbang-mgon-po, a Tibetan peasant from Kluchu, confirmed that, “In the past, marriages were arranged in wintertime because people had leisure time” (Interview, September 2009). The second important reason is that both herders and farmers easily preserve foods for a long time in winter because of the cold weather in Amdo. Another simple and powerful reason is the New Year³⁵ celebration, which occurs in winter, and families can prepare foods and other items for the New Year celebration and weddings together. Suonan caidan (2009) noted, “Whether in urban cities or in rural villages, the wedding ceremony usually takes place before and after the Tibetan New Year. It is an appropriate time because it is between autumn and spring, people have more free time to spend for celebrations.”³⁶

Many families organize weddings in the eleventh month of the lunar calendar because they have free time. The popular dates for wedding in Amdo are 11th of the eleventh lunar month, and the 3rd, 5th, 11th, 13th and 15th of the first lunar month around Chinese New Year. As discussed above, Tibetans assume that odd numbers are lucky numbers for a wedding date, but Han Chinese people choose even numbers for a wedding date. However, Tibetan families consult a lama, monk, or astrologer in order to select an auspicious date for the wedding. As Grunfeld (1996) observed, “[T]he date of the proposed marriage was also astrologically selected” (p. 19). Another factor that affects a wedding date is that Amdobas do not celebrate a marriage or arrange a wedding if one side of the bridegroom’s family or bride’s family is mourning the death of a family member. Normally a family can have a wedding ceremony one year after the death if the

³⁵ Amdobas celebrate Chinese New Year rather than Tibetan New Year in most areas of Amdo.

³⁶ Probably in Nangchen Tibetans actually celebrate Tibetan New Year rather than Chinese New Year. In 1999, I noticed that in Skyergu Town, the seat of Yushu Prefecture, Tibetans celebrate both Chinese and Tibetan New Year when I worked for a relief project in Yushu.

deceased is a close relative or a family member. One year is not a whole year or 12 months, but it means after a New Year celebration. For instance, if a family has lost an elderly person in July of one lunar year, this family can arrange a wedding in the second month of lunar calendar in the next year. In some places, people do not need to have a mourning period if the deceased is a child under the age of 13. The death of a young child often does not affect a wedding date, but the family may not arrange a wedding for a short period after the death. However, people in Amdo choose a lucky date and are happy and excited while a marriage is being celebrated.

9.2 Two Types of Weddings

There are two ways to welcome a bride to a bridegroom's family in Amdo. The first and most common one is called "great wedding" or *bag chen*, which takes place during the daytime. In this process, *a-zhang tshang*³⁷ escorts the bride with her dowry to the groom's family on the same day, and later the matchmaker and groom present the *rgyu* to the bride's family in agricultural areas. In some pastoral areas, for example, in Rmachu County, the groom and his relatives (often an odd number of people) visit the bride's family and stay overnight with the bride's family. The bride's family arranges a small party for the team of inviters. The team of inviters brings the bride back to the groom's family without *a-zhang tshang* or any company from bride family, and the group becomes an even number when the bride is added to the group. The groom receives a horse from the bride's family, and it is called "the groom's horse" (or *mag rta*). The bride will return to her natal home after a certain time, and her relatives will escort her to the groom's family when she returns to her husband. The groom's family arranges a formal wedding ceremony to welcome the bride and her relatives. As a principle of reciprocity at this time, the groom's family has to give a horse to the bride's brother called "the brother's horse" (Tibetan: *ming rta* or *mying rta*). There is no tradition of paying bridewealth in this region, but the groom's family gives a *mdzo mo*³⁸ to the bride's mother as *nu rin*. The *Dpa'rispas* (people from Dpa'ris) have to give a horse to the bride's elder brother and to *a-zhang* or the bride's mother's brother. The bride's younger brother receives a sheep, and the bride's father's brother receives a yak. The *a-zhang* is the most powerful person regarding marriage a decision in Dpa'ris, and his sister or the mother of the bride also receives *mdzo mo* for *nu rin*. However, both farmers and nomads keep the principle of reciprocity when they establish alliances. For unknown reasons,

³⁷ *A-zhang-tshang* is the group of people from the bride's family who side to escort the bride when she is sent to the groom's family. The number of *a-zhang-tshang* varies from village to village. Usually, the number is between 3 to 50 people. The bride family needs to present the dowry if the wedding is celebrated as *bag chen*. *A-zhang-tshang* will not participate in the wedding will present the dowry to groom's family if it is *bag chung*.

³⁸ *Mdzo mo* is a hybrid animal from an ox and a female yak. The female of this animal is called *mdzo mo*, and the male is called *mdzo*.

Tibetans often ignore the father's role in a marriage, though in many cases he makes the final decision about whether the marriage will take place. Probably, the father did not have the right to exchange his daughter with alliances traditionally, but a woman's brother might have had the right to exchange his sister with his alliances through his *a-zhang*'s help.

The second wedding is called a "simple wedding" or *bag chung*; some may refer to it as "taking a bride from a neighbor" or *khyim mtshe'I bag len*, when *a-zhang tshang* will not escort the bride, but the matchmaker, groom, and bridesmaid bring her to the groom's family. Both families agree to skip all traditional marriage rituals, and some families do not even arrange a marriage feast. In this case, the groom's family may not pay a bridewealth, and the bride's family will not present the dowry or it is given later. Dkon-mchog-chos-'phel described these two methods of arranging weddings in Rdobis Township:

[There are] two ways to send a bride [to the groom's family], It should be *bag chen* if a bride capture has taken place. The *a-zhang-tshang*³⁹ will escort the bride and send her to the groom's family during the day. The bride will go with *a-zhang-tshang* and they will bring the dowry. It is the same way as when Chinese Princess 文成公主[Wencheng gongzhu] was sent to Tibet. It is also possible to send the bride [to the groom's family] on the same day when groom's family pays the brideprice. A family also can arrange *bag chung* if it is hard to arrange *bag chen*, for example, the family is unable to prepare dowry. During a *bag chung* the groom, matchmaker and bridesmaid go to the bride's family to present the brideprice and bring her to the groom's family that day or evening. (Interview, September 2010)

This old villager also mentioned that currently his fellow villagers intend to have *bag chung* because many people try to avoid paying a dowry before a marriage becomes stable. He noted:

Today, *a-zhang-tshang* only go [to visit a groom's family] after the bride has given birth. It seems that they think too much. The *a-zhang-tshang* has to bring a dowry and display it in the courtyard [of the groom's family in order to show the bride's family's prosperity]. Nowadays people are becoming bad, everyone behaves badly. Therefore, people do not trust each other, and the bride's family may not get the dowry back if a divorce occurs. That is why they wait until [she] gives birth. Otherwise, the clothing will not be returned. It is better to avoid conflict. If there is a baby, then the groom's family cannot easily send the bride away. (Interview, September 2010)

In Rdobis, the bridegroom also goes with the go-between to the bride's family when his family invites her to the wedding ceremony. They have to offer candies and money to the village women because they often make trouble while the wedding ceremony is being planned. Women try to attack the go-between and his assistant by pulling on their ears (In some places, such as in Bayan, Gcantsha and Rebgong, the village women pull the groom's ears.) and one of the two men has to sing songs in order persuade the village

³⁹ The woman or man giver (the family and clan) is *a-zhang tshang*, and the woman or man receiver is *nyen tshang*.

women to let them pass. Therefore, the go-between often brings a singer with him if the go-between himself is not a good singer. A male from the bride's side negotiates with the women and asks them to give way or move on after the go-between or his assistant sings a song or offer candies or cash to the women. The women block the group again after they have moved on, for around three meters. The go-between and his assistant have to offer more money and/or sing another song. The women may or may not let them move on. If not, again, someone from the bride's side negotiates with the village women and asks their permission to pass. As Puhua dongzhi (2006) pointed out, "The groom and his companion's arrive at the bride's home, often with the women from the bride's village attacking the groom and his companion and pulling their ears and the companion singing to thwart the women's attack."

The father's brother (or *A-khu*), mother's brother (or *a-zhang*), bride's brother and some relatives of the bride and few villagers of her village will go along with the bride to the bridegroom's family. This group of people is called an *a-zhang tshang*⁴⁰ and they are especially respected by the *gnyen tshang*, the bridegroom's family. In Amdo, *a-zhang tshang* indicates those who provide a bride or a groom, and *gnyen tshang* indicates those who receive a bride or a groom. Tibetans often say, "*a-zhang-tshang* receive one day respect, and parents receive life long respect" (Tibetans: *a-zhang nyin gcig bkur, pha ma tshe gang bkur*). In most places in Amdo, women from the bride's side do not escort the bride to go to the groom's family though many peasants traditionally send a bridesmaid to accompany the bride. In Skeba village of Khrika, women also escort the bride to the groom's family at the wedding and they are called "aunts" or *a-nye tsho*.

9.3 Wedding Rituals in Grotshang

So-ba Sprang-thar-rgya-mtsho (2009) described Grotshang wedding rituals in detail and I summarize major wedding rituals of Grotshang according to his account to show a complete picture of the complicated wedding rituals in Tibet. Tibetans usually follow all or parts of these rituals when it comes to the wedding ceremony:

1) Wedding procession (*bag skyel*): a) Preparation (*gra sgrig*); b) Peers arrange feast for the bride (*kha ya na zlas[zla'i] ston mo*); c) changing bride's hairstyle (*skra shad pa*); d) selecting bridesmaid (*bag rogs 'dem pa*); e) purifying bride's clothing (*bkra shis byed pa*); f) welcome bride's horse (*bag rta bsu ba*); g) preparing dowry (*lag skyes gra sgrig*); g) banquet (*ston mo*). (So-ba Sprang-thar-rgya-mtsho, 2009, pp. 20-28)

⁴⁰ In nomadic areas, herders only refer to this group of people as *a-zhnag-tshang* during the wedding, but Tibetans in Rebgong and some other agricultural villages use this term *a-zhang-tshang* to indicate their wives' and husbands' families. Basically *tshang* means net or home. That is why in Amdo people use *tshang* to indicate the lineage of a family. It is equivalent to English way of adding 's after a family name and indicate whole family. For instance, *Don-grub tshang* could be Don-grubs.

2) Set out: a) Singing bride's song (*bag glu*); b) offering banquet (*ston mo bsham pa*); c) set out (*lam la chas pa*); d) receiving greetings on the way (*ja thab*). (So-ba Sprang-thar-rgya-mtsho, 2009, pp. 20-28)

3) Welcoming the bride:

A) First day rituals: a) Sending harbinger or *dri skur*, who welcomes the bride's groups three times before they reach the groom's family; b) welcome song (*bsu glu seng a dbyangs len pa*); c) putting out dismount white felt for bride (*'bab rten gtong ba*); d) baptism (*sna khrus*); e) singing song and dance at the gate (*sgo chang gi glu len pa dang bro rtse ba*); f) dharma circumambulation in the courtyard (*lhas ra'I nang du chos skor brgyag[rgyag] pa*); g) hair ritual (*mgo 'dogs cho ga sgrub pa*); h) offering tea (*ja 'phyar ba*); i) line up (*gral sgrig pa*); j) introduce affinities (*gnyen nye phan tshun ngos 'zing pa*); j) song of offering tea (*ja glu len pa*); k) praise groom's whip (*mag lcag bstod glu len pa*); l) song of tea history (*ja rgyus bshad pa'I glu ja ma lo len pa*); m) acknowledge go-between (*bar pa'I bstod glu len pa*); o) song of offering clothing to mother-in-law (*sgyug lwa 'bul ba*). (Sprang-thar-rgya-mtsho, 2009, pp. 28-40)

B) Second day rituals: a) The groom serves a-zhang-tshang (*a-zhang 'tshams 'dri*); b) the bride offers tea to the father-in-law and mother-in-law (*sgyug po sgyug mo ja 'dren*); c) relatives invite a-zhang-tshang (*ngye ring tshos a-zhang-tshang mgron 'bod*); d) banquet or breakfast (*nangs ja*); e) offering gifts and giving a congratulatory wedding speech; f) entertainment (*ku re rtse d gku*). (So-ba Sprang-thar-rgya-mtsho, 2009, pp. 40-45)

C) Third day rituals: a) Guests from bride's side return home (*a-zhang phyir ldog*); b) thank host (*ldug spug/sprug*). (So-ba Sprang-thar-rgya-mtsho, 2009 pp.43-45)

D) Meet or unite (*'hprad ma*). (p. 46) The bride leaves for her natal home when her companions, *a-zhang sthang*, return to their homes. She may stay at her parents' home for several days or months before she returns to her husband's home.

In Amdo, some Tibetan tribes have a tradition called (Tibetan: *zhag gcig mna' ma* or *zhag gsum mna' ma*, or *'phrad ma*) *buluo fujia* 不落夫家 in Chinese with the meaning of "does not stay at her husband's home." It refers to the bride who will stay in her home for a long period time after the wedding. The period of time she stays at her home varies from a few days or months to a year or several years. Levi-Strauss (1969 [1949]) noted that "[T]he prolonged stay of the young wife with her family" is a common feature among the Lolo and Kachin systems (p.375). Stockard (2002) observed, "delayed transfer marriage" in the Han Chinese communities of South China and it means "marriage required by custom that husbands and wives live apart for the first few years of marriage" (p.4).

Among the remnants of the tradition of *buluo fujia* among some villagers in Amdo is that the new couple does not sleep together in the same room during the wedding. The bride will not enter her bridal chamber on the first night during the wedding. Other bridesmaids accompany her for the whole night, and her mother-in-law introduces her to

relatives in the village after breakfast on the second day. The bride will visit the kitchen and make herself familiar with the environment, and, at the same time, a farewell ceremony will take place. The bride will return to her own family and stay there for a while. Today, none of the local people can explain why it is believed that the new bride should stay at her parents' home after the wedding. A member of her family or her husband's family chooses a propitious date and sends her back to the husband's family. The bride begins her married life when she returns to live with her husband's family. A Tibetan scholar, Pad-ma-lhun-grub, from Gcantsha County attempted to interpret this phenomenon:

One goal of marriage is reproduce, and a woman should have a healthy body for this purpose. A new bride will take care of her health at home and prepare for pregnancy. She can only do it in a relaxed way at her own home without being disturbed. Usually the new bride receives nice treatment at home, and she does not need to work. She will gain weight with her comfortable life and her parents will send her to the bridegroom's family when they think her body is ready for bearing children. Many young men in the village often half jokingly encourage the new bridegroom to get his wife pregnant when the new couple has sex for the first time. Married men offer the groom different instructions for his first sexual encounter with his new wife. We call the bride as "meeting woman" (Tibetan: 'phrad ma) when she comes back her husband's home. It means that she has come to meet her husband, for intercourse, though I am really not sure about the exact meaning of the term 'phrad ma⁴¹. I just guess the meaning. (Interview, February 2010)

Souduanzhi 索端智 (2001) discussed this tradition in Grotshang:

After the wedding the groom and a few of his male relatives bring the bride back to her family. She will stay at her parents' home for several days. Her father or uncle will choose a propitious date and sends her to the groom's family. Then, the new couple begins to live together and start their married life. (p. 29)

Historically Tibetans in other places used to have a similar tradition; today we can find this tradition in most places in Amdo. In contrast, some places in Amdo, the bride is not allowed to visit her family during a certain period of time after the wedding. Some families also arrange another wedding ceremony when the bride returns to her parents' home. If the houses of the two families are close by, the two wedding ceremonies take place on the same day. The first time the married couple goes to visit the bride's family, the couple receives gifts from her relatives and friends. When they return to the husband's family, these gifts will be brought to her husband's family. The groom's relatives also give animals or other gifts to the new couple beforehand. In some places the bride's relatives and friends even invite the groom's relatives to their homes to present them with gifts - mainly pieces of fabric or animals. But farmers may present the girl's share as a dowry during a wedding.

⁴¹ Literally it means meeting woman or a woman who see or meet someone (husband).

9.4 Some Wedding Rituals in Rdobis

In this section, I explain some parts of wedding rituals of agrarians in Rdobis and deliberate on certain parts of nomadic wedding rituals in the next section. The previous section offers a general picture of Tibetan wedding rituals and it is necessary to discuss some parts in detail in order to understand the points of wedding rituals. Some people emphasize these parts, and others focus on those parts during a wedding ceremony. Many of them certainly skip a big portion of the rituals.

The bride dismounts on a white felt after arrival in her husband's village and first she has to make three prostrations toward her husband's village and then another three prostrations toward the groom's parents' home, and then she enters the shrine room of the groom's family and make three more prostrations there.

Three bowls of milk tea are prepared by the groom's family, and the bride offers the first one to the shrine room. She then offers the second one to the father-in-law and addresses him as "grandfather" or *a-myes*. She offers the third one to the mother-in-law and addresses her as aunt or *a-ne*. Meanwhile, the bride's family displays all the dowries in the courtyard of the groom's family, and the eyes of the guests may be distracted by this show. The groom's family pleasantly treats the guests, who are from the bride's family, and provides them with a rich banquet complete with singing and dancing. A man (whose profession is to give wedding speeches or sing folk songs and receives gifts or payment for his work during a wedding ceremony) makes a wedding speech to trace back the history of the marriage and the greatness of the new couple and their families. The bride stays at her husband's home after the wedding ceremony, and her companions do not stay overnight. Her husband's family takes her to her natal home after three days with a bamboo basket of red breads. Her parents provide a similar gift when she returns to her husband's home.

9.5 Wedding Ceremony in Nomadic Regions

The etiquettes of marriage negotiation in nomadic areas is similar to that of agricultural areas, and I will not repeat them here. The final ritual of a marriage would be the actual wedding ceremony where the bride and groom become a married couple, and it consists of many elaborate parts.

9.5.1 Wedding Procession

In many nomads in Amdo, two lucky women, who have good marriages and healthy children and living parents, help the bride to change her hairstyle at dawn of the wedding day, and her brother sings the hairdo song during the combing of her hair. Several small size turquoise pieces symbolizing good-luck are woven into the bride's hair braid and she

gives them back to her mother before her departure. Normally neither the bridegroom nor any person from his family visits the bride's parents' home on the wedding day, but Tshe-brtan-rgyal (2010) mentioned that in some nomadic areas (Rmachu, Kluchu, Cone, bsangchu, Dpa'ris and upper Thebo) a band from the bridegroom's family must reach the bride's home before daybreak (p.55). The bride's family sends a band to the bridegroom's family with the bride in the early morning. The bride weeps to show that she is sad to leave her parents behind and that it is hard to leave her relatives and friends. She has to encircle the tent of her natal home three times before departure. Her mother loudly says three times "please bring happiness with you, and leave good-luck to me" and she answers three times "sure." After the three rounds, the bride rides a white horse and one person (normally her brother) leads her horse.

In agricultural areas, the group that is accompanying the bride encircles the middle pillar of the bride's parents house. Her brother or uncle leads along her horse, and the band departs from her natal home. There is no bridesmaid, and the bride's father never becomes a member of the group. The group escorts the bride on her way to the bridegroom's family. In the past, generally in nomadic regions, the bride used to be welcomed by men on horseback. The horses used to be elaborately decorated. Today, people use a car or tractor to welcome the bride if she comes from a long distance. In urban areas, well-decorated cars drive the bride around during the wedding.

Both families discuss how many people should be sent by the bride's family prior to the wedding. In many places 10-20 people accompany the bride, and the numbers are decided through negotiations between the two families. Tshul-blo et al. (1996) observed, "For the Tibetans of the Mgarrrtse Tribe in 'Ba'rtsong, the bride's family sends double companions. For example, if the groom's family sends 10 companions⁴², the bride's family sends 20 companions (p.199). It would be a big problem if the bride's family sent more people than what was agreed to beforehand because the bridegroom's family has to prepare gifts for the guests according to their relationships with the bride. The same is true in agricultural areas as well. It is generally assumed that the more wealthy and powerful a family is, the greater number of guests they will be allowed to send to a wedding. In most cases, more guests means more gifts for the bride. In some places, it is customary to display things brought from the bride's family in the bridegroom's courtyard during the wedding. The purpose of a wedding is not only to set up two

⁴² In many Tibetan regions of Amdo, the bride's family invites the bridegroom to his wife-to-be's natal home before or after the wedding and Tibetans call it as "inviting bridegroom" or *mag 'bod*. There are many rituals during a *mag 'bod* and it basically another kind of wedding ceremony arranged by the bride's family. Traditionally, the bridegroom receives a horse from the bride's family and other gifts from her relatives. The bridegroom may not visit his wife's natal home if her family does not arrange this ceremony. People from Mgarrrtse arrange a *mag 'bod* before the wedding, which is arranged by the bridegroom's family.

people's marriage status, but also to use the kin network and build a family reputation. The final goal is to celebrate the new relationship.

9.5.2 Welcoming the Bride

Three rounds of greetings or offerings take place before the group of the bride's family reach the groom's home. A gang of horse riders from the groom's family meet the band of the bride three times, they offer liquor three times after every round to the main guest (usually the bride's mother's brother) three times.

The band approaches to the groom's home from a lower location, and a lucky girl takes the horse rope from the brother, and there is a white felt for the bride's dismount. The bride's brother assists her in dismounting and comforts her. Then two important men (her brother and uncle) from the band support her with their hands and they enter the groom's home tent. Other members of the band pull her hat little bit backward in order to take the luck, and young women pull her hat little bit forward to remind her to be well-behaved. The band or *a-zhang-tshang* also presents some dowries such as one sheep body and Tibetan sweet cake at this time.

A monk or lay-practitioner (*sngags pa*) conducts the "ritual of bringing luck" (*gyang 'bod*) and purifies the bride in case the bride brought evil spirits with her. The group accompanying the bride tries to interrupt the purification ritual for the bride because they assume that she is pure. The bride sits on the women's side of the tent, and she has to cover her nose with her sleeve all the time. The group accompanying the bride sits on the men's side of the tent. The groom's family begins to offer tea and conversations go on. A good speaker from bridegroom's group give a wedding speech to trace back history of the marriage and introduce the marriage rituals. A Tibetan artist, Mgolog Zla-bhe, mentioned that, "I earned a lot of money through giving congratulatory speeches for weddings. At that time my salary was 200 RMB per month, but I could earn more money when I gave speeches at weddings in Mgolog" (Interview, August 2009). After his speech, lucky young women braid a few lines of the bride's hair and put small white wool in her hair. The bride is taken to the "bride tent" (or *bag gur*) and she can rest there because the door of tent is closed and others may not bother her. Only her relatives in groom's group can visit her and talk to her. She has to fast during the wedding day though the groom's family displays plenty of food in her tent.

The band from the bride's family enjoys food and beverages offered by the groom's family. The bridal party has to present pieces of cloth or silk to women for thanking them for making tea. There is then a singing competition between the bridal party and the groom's party. They even sing love songs in the evening if the band from the bride's side stays overnight and the elders give permission to sing love songs. Farmers do not have a tradition of singing love songs during a wedding ceremony. The last part of the songs is called "good wish song" (or *bkra shis 'jog pa*) and it means that the both sides of the

group make good wishes for the new couple using beautiful songs. The groom's family presents gifts for each member of the bridal party according to their roles. The bride's brother and uncle (her mother's brother) often receive special respect and gifts on the wedding day.

In Padma County in Golok, the brother of the bride is an important figure among *a-zhang-tshang* because he has to take care of his sister's marriage and her life in the future. The brother of the bride is the main figure during a wedding ceremony, and he traditionally receives a *mying/ming rta* "a horse for the brother" from the bridegroom's family. That means that the brother has to accompany his sister when she is sent to the bridegroom's family. Besides her brother, other relatives and friends escort the bride to the bridegroom's family. Whoever accompanies the bride receives *kha 'dang* or *bzo mgo*, "pieces of clothes for a robe" from the bridegroom's family. Usually the two families make an agreement beforehand stating how many people will come.

In Padma, the bride's family may not send many people to accompany the bride for the wedding, and two to four people is the normal number. Plenty of food is served during the wedding, but there is no entertainment, ritual, or congratulatory speech for the wedding or for the new couple. The family members and guests from the bride's side have food together. People eat until they are full. In some places in Amdo, it is not polite to consume too much food during a wedding, especially if the guests are from the bride's side. The guests and others have to consume food in moderation. There is Tibetan saying to illustrate this custom in Amdo, "The wedding ceremony has great fame, but there is much hunger and thirst."

The bridal party leaves for home, and the bride does not stay with her husband following the wedding. This is why Tibetans call it a "one night bride" (*zhag gcig mna' ma*). Her father will take her back to her husband's home after a few days or months and he will present the dowry to her husband's or his family. Some nomadic places the bride stays her husband's home from the wedding day and she will get her dowry when she first visits her natal home after her marriage.

According to Chen Liming's research (2008) in Central Tibet, the length of a wedding depends on the economic conditions of the host family. The wedding can last as long as 10 days, but there is a minimum of three days, and most weddings last for five or six days. People in Amdo do not celebrate a wedding for more than two or three days. Nomads will generally only celebrate a wedding for one day, though wealthier families may celebrate longer. In agricultural and pastoral areas, a wedding contains some distinct rituals, but the event is generally simple, funny, lively, and enjoyable.

9.6 Urban Wedding

Urban weddings adopt modern elements and show the characteristics of a contemporary lifestyle. In urban areas, a wedding has been gradually shifted from the original ritual

type into more of an entertainment event. Nevertheless, some traditional features continue to exist in urban weddings. Urban citizens consult a lama or monk in choosing a wedding date. They also hang a *kha btags* on the doorpost and invite an elder to give a congratulatory speech and offer good wishes. The offering of *bsang*⁴³ is still very popular. One can only find symbolic rituals and significantly simplified procedure of ceremony in today's urban wedding. As Suonan Caidan (2009) observed:

In cities and towns, the wedding has been marked by modern elements; generally the bridegroom's family receives guests at a large restaurant. Relatives and friends participate in the wedding ceremony with a gift and offer *kha batgs* to the bride and groom. Although plenty of food is provided for the guests, the ceremony is relatively simple and more focused on entertainment rather than on rituals.

Tibetans have adopted Chinese or modern ways of presenting gifts, which are usually, dominated by the giving of cash gifts. The amount of money varies from place to place. Most workers had to spend more than 100 RMB in Ziling City in 2009. Recently some nomads and farmers have also asked their relatives and friends to present cash gifts rather than pieces of fabric. Many of my informants believe that it is wise to give 5 or 10 RMB (around 0.5 or 1 Euro) to a family during a wedding but no fabric, which they consider useless and worthless. As a nomadic herder, 'Brug-lha, confirmed:

People present a piece of fabric to the family who arranges a wedding traditionally in our village, but now our village committee has set up a new rule for people to bring cash as wedding gifts. You know that the piece of cloth is actually useless. (Interview, September 2007)

There are many other modern elements brought to weddings in Tibetan areas. As Chen Liming (2008) pointed out:

Many traditional wedding rituals have disappeared. But new and modern elements were brought to a wedding. People take photos and record the wedding ceremonies with cameras; cars are used for wedding transportation, and some families use a tape-recorder or other machines to play songs and make wishes for marriages. More and more people travel on their honeymoons, and they enjoy their honeymoons in different places and cultures. Of course, after the tour new couples have to give a party for their friends, relatives, and colleagues to publicize the marriage.

My own experience and fieldwork show that new Tibetan couples still do not have any conception of a honeymoon tour, although it has become fashionable for many young Han Chinese couples. Many Tibetan families in towns give wedding ceremonies at a restaurant, and the guests enjoy plenty of food and liquor. There are singers who sing Tibetan songs during the wedding. This kind of wedding is mostly profit-oriented, and cash gifts given by the guests are an essential part of the wedding. I observed that many new couples often make a few hundred thousand Chinese *yuan* 元 (a few thousand Euros)

⁴³ Smoking offering. Tibetans offer smoking offerings to mountain-gods to request protection.

during a wedding ceremony in cities and towns. The amount depends on how many people are attending the wedding and how much every guest offers.

This trend has also influenced farmers and nomads. Amdobas believe that cash is the best form of wedding gift because new couples can buy what they really need. Otherwise, people may give useless things to the new couple, and it is hard to reject a wedding gift openly. In rural areas, people may offer any kind of gift, and new couples have to accept it. The gift often goes to the bridegroom's family in remote areas. Why does bridegroom's family take the gifts? Explaining where the new couple lives may help to answer this question.

10.0 Marital Residence

The extended family is the traditional living arrangement in Amdo, though many young couples want to have a separate residence as soon as possible. In rural areas, a newly married couple usually stays with the husband's family. This pattern of residence is called patrilocal residence, and Amdobas practice this pattern at the beginning of their marriage.

Traditionally, the sons of a family take wives and then some of them will set up new households with their wives after they have had children. In agricultural areas, a family has to build new houses for them and give them farmland according to the family's economic condition. Nomads only need to make new tents and give several animals to newly established households. The couples will be separated from grooms' family soon after weddings or later when another brother gets married. Normally, one son will take care of their parents and stay in the same family and the other households will keep the name of the parents' family. Tibetans often use "subtent or subhome" (Tibetan: *sbra kha ya*) to describe the new households. This shows that a new household is not an independent family, but it relies on the original family or father's family. Today many siblings have trouble taking care of their parents. In agricultural areas, two brothers separately take care of their aging parents. For instance, if the two brothers or sisters have their own homes, the older brother takes care of the father, and the younger brother or sister (often brothers, but sometimes sisters) looks after the mother. In some cases, a woman can take a husband, and the husband should stay with at his wife's or the bride's family. This pattern is known as matrilocal residence in anthropological circles. An equivalent Tibetan conception for this term is *mag pa bzhag* (literally, it means placing a husband).

Mag pa bzhag is a kind of uxorilocal marriage. Uxorilocal marriage means that a man moves into his wife's or the bride's family when he gets married. Villagers, except in some areas in Golok, equally accept both patrilocal or matrilocal living arrangements. As Rinzin Thargyal (2007) observed:

Normally, sons were not supposed to leave their natal homes. Those who did so were either "grooms" or *mag pa* for sonless households, or they were immigrants and refugees, or they refused to share a common wife with their brothers or with their father, if the latter had taken a second wife after the death of his first wife. (p.139)

Generally, a family hosts a groom in order to solve a labor problem. It is hard to survive in Tibetan society without a male and his labor and/or reputation. Another cultural factor is that some families love their daughters for different reasons and cannot bear to let them to go away with a man. The best way to solve this kind of problem is to request that a groom to move in with the bride's family.

If the bride's family wants a *mag pa*, her family has to propose the marriage. The procedure of marriage negotiation is similar to the aforementioned steps. After both, the bridegroom's family and the bride's family make a deal regarding the marriage; the bridegroom's family members and friends send the bridegroom to the bride's family. The *mag pa* or son-in-law has an equal status with other family members of his wife. But there is common Tibetan saying which illustrates in reality *mag pa* is not desirable, "a new son-in-law or *mag pa* treated like a son, an aged *mag pa* treated like a dog" (Tibetan: *mag pa gsar ba bu dang 'dra, go khar lhung na khyi dang 'dra*).

In Padma County in Golok, locals do not have the conception of *mag pa bzahag* "placing a bridegroom." That means that locals do not practice *mag pa* marriage, and a husband does not reside at the wife's family. If parents only have one daughter, she is the only one who has to take care of her parents. In this case, she has one option to produce next generation for her family. She stays at her parents' home without marrying, having children with a lover. She can also marry a man and go live with his family. In the latter case, she loses her reputation among the community because she gives up her obligation to look after her parents. However, she cannot take a husband into her parent's home. If she has a child before the marriage, the father of the child becomes an enemy of her family unless he confesses and offers some gifts to her family. The family may allow him to visit her but not to get married into her family. A *Mgologpa*, 'Jam-dbyangs-blogros, observed that, "In some areas in *Mgolog* a man can move in with his wife's family, but I think that is the influence from other Amdo regions" (Interview, September 2009). Rinzin Thargyal (2007) stated, "The *magpa* phenomenon was quite common among the nobility throughout Tibet. This form of marriage entailed matrilocality and demonstrates how flexible the Tibetan marriage system was" (p.169). In Dpa'ris County, Tibetans do not simply accept a *mag pa* who wants to marry in his wife's family. Bsam-grub-tshe-ring and 'Chi-med-rdo-rje stated, "A family only accepts a *mag pa* who marries in his wife's family if he first becomes the adopted son of his wife's family and changes his surname or family name" (Interview, September 2010). That means actually the *mag pa* is not just the husband of the family's daughter, but he also is a male heir of the family, and he and his descendants will carry the name of his wife's family. He and his wife must

stay in her natal home because a family that does not have a male heir will use this strategy to acquire one.

Parents have different ideas concerning where a new couple should live. Some parents hope the new couple will move to a new home soon after their wedding so that the family may keep a good relationship with all of the family members. In this case, the parents set up a new home for the new couple. Some families wait until there is a problem among the family members, and then the new couple separates from the husband's family to avoid more trouble for the family.

Many newly married couples desire their own homes immediately after the marriage. This pattern of neolocality has become the popular marriage residence arrangement in Amdo. This trend is observed in the Bongstag tribes and was described by Sanmucai (2006). New couples prefer to be neolocal and leave their elders behind. Young people are happy to inherit the property of their parents but have no desire to look after the elders, and they consider elderly people to be a burden. Many couples separate from their parents, and the elders live with no help. Many couples are moving into houses rather than staying in tents, where they live with parents and do not share living spaces and love. Traditionally, the question of where the new couple lives is usually discussed by both sets of parents. Sometimes the parents will consult a diviner to determine the residence. The decision-making power is gradually taken over by the young couples, who adopt new ideas quickly and are unenthusiastic about old custom. Their radical attitude challenges traditional values and norms (p. 202).

11.0 Divorce

Men and women may wish they could be lifelong partners, though this is not always possible in reality. Rates of divorce have risen in many parts of the world, and Tibet is no exception. As Ma Rong (2008) observed:

Recent studies suggest rising a trend of divorce rates in both agrivultural and pastoral areas. Divorce case[s] increased from 2 in 1967 to 20 in 1983, then to 53 in 1985 in Shigatse [Gzhiskartse] County (Zhang Quanwu, 1986: 117). Divorce rates also increased in urban areas in the 1980s. (p. 244)

Similarly, 'Brug mo skyid (2010) et al. also stated that, "Historically, divorce has been rare in Stag rig Village but since about 1995, it has become increasingly common" (p. 206). It is also true that the divorce rate in Amdo has been increasing because of legal changes in 1980, which allowed a couple to divorce if only one party requests it.

A Chinese scholar, Ma Rong (2008, p. 242), simply assumed that divorce was a relatively simple issue among Tibetans in most cases because Tibetans tend to have less restrictive marriage customs and have less discrimination against divorced women. Samuca (2006) observed that in the past half century, the rate of divorce has gone up. A

high rate of divorce seems to have risen steadily since the 1970s, especially among women in the 30–40 age group. (p. 200)

Most societies have a mechanism in place for ending marriages. Tibetans in Amdo have cultural and social reasons for divorce. Divorce is a common concept in Amdo, but it is not a welcome word. Men and women in Amdo have to face marriage troubles, and a marriage only ends formally after a divorce. Traditionally, a divorce is recognized after both families approved the separation of a couple. Today many couples need go to local offices to get divorce papers if they originally registered their marriages. Otherwise, the two families discuss the marriage issue and declare the divorce. It is difficult to divorce without the family's interference. Traditionally there is no written divorce law or procedure. In general, it does not go through local officials because families and friends, including matchmakers, handle the issue. Normally, family and friends discourage divorce. They try to persuade the couple to stay in the marriage. If the efforts of others do not work, the couple will separate, and the divorce is valid.

Given this description, it would seem that divorce is a relatively simple matter. In reality, some divorces are more complicated than the marriage was. In Tibet, divorce not only affects the couple but the entire alliance between the two families.

If there is a dispute about the division of property or childcare, a couple or their families will seek help from officials and/or village elders to reach an agreement. There are many cases in which that couples sue each other in court in order for the court to decide these issues. Commonly women tend to sue their husbands because women are the primary victims of domestic violence. In some cases, a woman cannot get any property if she initially proposes divorce.

Young Tibetan men and women have greater freedom to seek sexual partners before marriage, but there are principles and restrictions that couples must observe after the marriage. There are certain consequences of misbehavior, especially of having an affair. The public and his or her relatives criticize this affair. This affair also hurts the feelings of the husband or wife and affects the family's harmony. Infidelity has been the number one destroyer of marriages in Amdo in recent years. As 'Brug mo skyid et al. (2010) mentioned that, "Couples may find they have nothing in common. A spouse might also find a lover" (p. 206). A Tibetan taxi driver, Don-grub, from Chabcha, also observed:

Many couples are divorced in my home region [Mtsholho] because women had affairs when their husbands were away. Men often cheat on their wives, but they never tolerate their wives if they have affairs. Recently men have many new things such as cars and cell phones and these technologies help them to monitor their wives' behavior and find as many as lovers for themselves they can. Men have more opportunities to travel to different places and meet many people. However, wives are busy at home with other men when their husbands are absent. Many couples do not trust each other, and they spy on each other. One of the tricky things men do is that they go to town and inform their wives via phone that they will not return home that day. The wives may call their lovers and tell them their husbands are away. The husband suddenly comes back home in the middle of the night and catches his wife in bed with another man. This

is how the cell phones assist Tibetans in detecting the infidelity of their spouses. (Interview, June 2009)

It is clear that his statement may exaggerate the real situation, but it shows that infidelity is a common problem and that technology facilitates both the infidelity and the likelihood that those who engage in it will be caught. Infidelity is not only helped in Tibet by new technology but also by old traditions. It appears that the tradition of night visits has been helped by new technology. Samucaï (2006) argued that the night visit tradition also affects the marital situation because herders do not have a clear concept of marriage. Men and women meet at night and leave each other the next day. This sex-oriented marriage can make a marriage unstable (p. 200). Interaction with other ethnic groups has made extramarital affairs fashionable, too. It is common in China for many married men and women to have lovers, and women who have lovers proudly declare how they can buy and consume many things with their lovers' money, but not with their husbands' money. Tibetans have accepted the metrical concept of other ethnic groups and more people practice romantic/free love and seek extramarital affairs, which leads to an increased divorce rate (Sanmucai, 2006, p.199). Intercultural or international marriage itself is a problem because people are unable to tolerate another's culture or custom.

Divorces are also common because arranged marriages are common. In many places in Amdo, people still arrange marriages, even though freedom of marriage is also highly valued. Young people today often have a problem with marrying someone they do not know, even when their parents have arranged it. If the marriage occurs anyway, there is no love between husband and wife, and emotional issues can become a problem. Many Tibetan teachers and officials in Amdo had and have former wives from rural homes because of arranged marriages in the 1980s and earlier. Today many former wives lost their husbands, and the husbands enjoy their lives with their second or third young, wage-earning wives. Sometimes a man insists on taking a wife because of love or her appearance and he may not consider other things. If she is not a qualified bride according to the standards of her mother-in-law, she may have trouble with her mother-in-law, and the marriage becomes a problem for the rest of the family.

Social mobility and economic transition have become increasingly important factors that affect marriage stability. Villagers are forced by the economic market to seek income through their labor in towns and cities because making money has become the main goal of every person in Amdo today. Young villagers have to leave their wives and families behind to look for work opportunities and earn money. These young people may seek a new way of life after getting rich or having some money, and they can create problems in their marriage as a result. Wives may meet other men during their absence, or men may find other women in their places of work. They gain more information and experience in other lifestyles when they travel to look for jobs or by working with various groups of people. New ideas and views probably influence their way of thinking and dealing with things.

Young villagers jump into new relationships and quickly end a marriage. They believe that it is wise to divorce before having a child because each person can find the right person as long as they are still young. Therefore, it is thought that a quick divorce is better than suffering in a bad marriage. This attitude goes well with a Tibetan saying, “It is better to divorce if the couple does not have a common ground, and it is better to die if no medicine can treat his or her disease” (Tibetan: *mi ‘grigs bza’ ba ‘thor na bzang, mi drags nad pa shi na bzang*).

Ma Rong (2008) identified factors from other studies to illuminate the reasons of rising divorce rates in Tibet: (1) emotional distance emerged after the wedding; (2) unstable income caused [by] quarrels; (3) one or both partners sought new lovers; (4) no registration for marriage in the past; (5) some youth oppose their “parents decided marriage” by applying for divorce; (6) revival of “class ideology” resulted in crisis of marriage which did not match each other by traditional opinion; (7) intervening of religious power ([the] assessment of marriage by monks) or by [a] third party; and (8) [the] misunderstanding of “free love” (p. 246).

I analyzed some of these factors above, and I ignored others because those factors are not common in Amdo. For example, reasons (4), (5), (6), (7) and (8) are only used occasionally as reasons for divorce. No one really can tell others what is free love and understand it. Some outsiders often see Tibetan religion and tradition negatively and label them as troublemakers for modern society. As I described above marriage is usually arranged carefully and seriously among farmers and nomads in Amdo. Religious consultation often takes place before marriage, and traditional norms make a strong bond of alliances. Domestic violence has been ignored by researchers, but it has been a dominant factor which generates many divorces because Tibetans still feel that masculinity is a desirable, social attitude, and wife beating is common. Further research must be undertaken to find out the level or scale of domestic violence among Amdobas in order to understand the influence of domestic violence on divorce.

Many men or women feel it is difficult to divorce not only because of psychological drama, but because there are other concerns such as the division of property, child custody, and the relationship of alliances when a married couple chooses to get a divorce. In Amdo, the go-between can play a big role when a couple has a marital problem. If the go-between and family members, friends cannot stop the divorce, the go-between is usually the person who brokers the divorce. As ‘Brug mo skyid et al. (2010) observed in Stag rig Village, “The couples do not go to court for divorce; instead they ask matchmakers to be judges” (p. 206). The couples have to go to the Bureau of Civil Affairs in order to issue divorce certificates if they registered their marriage. Go-betweens and other village elders will handle issues of property division and child custody. Today, some couples seek help from courts when they feel that their villagers cannot handle their divorce problems.

12.0 Distribution of Property and Child Custody after Divorce

The distribution of property is a major issue in divorce procedures. In Amdo, couples have to divide their property when they get divorced, though men often gain more than women. Tibetans have still kept the traditional way of distributing property when they have a marriage crisis. The custody of children is another issue that usually needs to be discussed in a divorce proceeding.

In Rdobis, the go-between can play a significant role when a couple has a marital problem. He will discourage the couple from divorcing, and he will make every effort to help the couple reconcile before the marriage actually fails. If divorce is unavoidable, a woman without a child only receives her clothes and jewelry. A woman may get some share from her husband or his family if she has already given birth to a child or children during her marriage. Dkon-mchog-chos-'phel from Rdobis observed:

Traditionally, the bride family should return the brideprice or *rgyu*, but today, people are money oriented, and many families do not return the *rgyu*. In a few cases it was returned. It is hard to say. People are not kind now. They do unreasonable things. When I was young, most families return the *rgyu* [to groom's family]. If you did not return the *rgyu* it was a big shame. But today people are different, some even do not return the *gryu* [to groom's family], but [the bride's family] requests [the groom's family] to pay something for other reasons, for example, our daughter worked at your family and you have to pay for her labor, like that. (Interview, October 2010)

In general, when the couple breaks up, in principle, at least the woman should take back her dowry. The family property should be shared equally by all family members in theory, but women often receive little or nothing in reality. Ideally, the children are divided: the boys usually stay with their fathers, and the girls stay with their mothers. It is a complicated issue when people handle divorce cases. As Grunfeld (1996) described the settlement of divorce in Tibet where Tibetan culture originally developed:

There were no religious proscriptions against divorce. It was usually by mutual consent. On the condition that the wife was not responsible, the dowry was returned to her and she was given custody of the children and a share of the wealth accumulated during the marriage. The poor – in line with their marriage practices – divorce simply, just parting company, the wife in most cases taking the children. (p. 20)

There is a greater freedom for women to divorce and remarry. This does not say that woman can easily avoid public criticism. However, after the divorce, both partners are free to remarry. In nomadic areas, people do not really mind if a woman with a child remarries someone else.

Farmers are more conservative about a woman joining a family with children from another marriage. It is important to mention that this is not true of all farmers. There seems to be more criticism of divorce among farmers than there is among nomads. This is because agricultural villagers are close to each other geographically, while nomads do not live geographically close to other nomads.

In Mgolog, families may discuss the issue of child custody when a couple ends their marriage. Zla-bhe noted:

In many cases, if the child is a boy the father should take care of him. If the child is a girl, the mother should take her with her. This is not a fixed tradition, but people often say this way, 'a son should belong to the father; a daughter should belong to the mother. (Interview, August 2009)

It does not always work out this simply because the real situation is more complicated than the theory, and the mother and father are both attached to their children. In nomadic areas, women are not reluctant to take their children with them to their parents' home because mothers have stronger feelings about their children than fathers do. Another factor is that herders usually do not discriminate against a woman with children even when she intends to remarry.

If a couple is divorcing, the two families meet to discuss the issues of child custody. Dkon-mchog-chos-'phel observed:

If there is only one child, two families need to negotiate. Sometimes the groom's family wants the child, but the bride's family does not. If there are multiple children, the bride and the groom can divide them up between them. (Interview, October 2010)

According to China's marriage law, a court decides who gets custody of the children and how much the other spouse has to pay in child support. When the child reaches a certain age of 18, the child can choose which parent he/she wants to live with.

If the husband's family wants the child, the woman does not have the right to keep him or her. The woman has to take the child with her if the man's family does not want the child. If a woman has two children, she may take one with her and ask for some share of money for the other child from her husband's family. In this case, some families give some room for the child and she can take the wood of the rooms and other useful materials with her because her own family may build a house for her because she needs to live in her own place and not with her parents' family.

If the woman is over 40 years old, her chances of remarrying are remote, and she may not even be able to stay with her brother's family. She has to live alone, and her parents' family may offer a small amount of land and build a small house. She cannot come back to her own family and stay there, but her parents must always find a way to let her live alone.

Sometimes the two families also need to discuss the dowry and distribution of property. Normally, people in agricultural areas are poor, and they do not have much to contribute during marriage and divorce. Only if the divorce occurs shortly after the marriage does a woman's family have to give back the *rgyu* "brideprice" to the man's family. For instance, if a woman's family got 2000 RMB (around €200 Euros or \$290 U.S. dollars) for the brideprice, and a woman divorces after one year, her family may have to give back some part of the brideprice. There is no certain regulation or norm to

resolve the amount of the brideprice that should be returned to the husband's family. Therefore, one of the most disputed parts of a divorce in Amdo is the distribution of wealth. Usually the husband's family does not think a woman's labor can be calculated in cash. After many years of marriage, her husband's family does not return the brideprice to her family. Today, people are more focused on income, and the wives' families want to get something from the husbands' families when divorces occur. For example, in Rebgong, a man who wants to get divorced has been married to his wife for 16 years, but he is required by his wife to pay 5,000 RMB (around 500 Euros) for each year of his marriage. Some husbands' families refuse to pay any compensation to the bride's family by arguing that, "We brought your daughter as a bride, a future owner of this family, not as a servant."

Today, farmers and herders have begun to value the labors of their wives contribute when they negotiate divorce settlements. This is, in part, due to the expanding Chinese economy. However, the divorce negotiators⁴⁴ often try to find out who is the cause of the marital distress that led to the divorce. If the husband repudiates his wife for any reason, he should be fined and the wife stands to gain more property from him. If the wife wants to leave her husband's home for any reason, she will not be fined, but she will get little or no property. Usually negotiators try to make a fair judgment, and both husband and wife may agree to accept their decision. The divorce case can be brought to the court by either party if the village cannot find a solution to the divorce settlement. But a villager from Rdobis, Dkon-mchog-chos-'phel, stated:

Divorce will be meditated by the matchmaker. If he cannot handle it, the village will meditate it. Tibetans do not go to court, I think there is no case like that, and the village can handle it. Elder men from the village solve the problem and I have not heard any divorce case has been sent to court. (Interview, October 2010)

Among herders in Amdo, the mediators often try to find out who is at fault in the decline of the marriage so that he or she can pay the other party. Skar-kho from Rmachu County said:

If the bride is the troublemaker, her family has to pay the groom's family something. If the groom is the one at fault, his family needs to pay something to the bride's family. A group of mediators from the region make a final decision according to the debate of the couple and they will fine the faithless one. (Interview, August 2010)

Often people do not organize a wedding ceremony if a man and a woman are remarried. If the couple wants to have a wedding, it is a relatively simple one. Remarriage is common among both farmers and herders. However, the remarriage of widows and widowers is controversial.

⁴⁴ In agricultural areas, the go-between often plays a major role during divorce, but in some pastoral areas, either partner can choose a negotiator who can be trusted from their groups respectively. In most cases, negotiators often need to seek help from elders when they cannot fix problems.

13.0 Widows and Widowers

The Tibetan term for widow is *yugs sa ma*, and *yugs sa* is the term for widower. Many people discriminate against widows in Amdo. If someone says another woman is a widow or *yugs sa ma*, it is considered to be an insult. The person who says that means he or she wants the woman to become a widow in her present life. We can understand how this term is serious among Tibetans when people quarrel. A woman says to another woman, “You are a widow,” even if she is an unmarried woman or a girl. English speakers may say, “You are a bitch.” This kind of statement hurts the heart of every Tibetan woman. Tibetans are suspicious about their karma and very sensitive to this kind of verbal attack. Tibetans try to avoid this term in their daily lives, and no woman wants to be a widow.

Tibetans assume that a widow is an unclean person, and her negative karma caused her to lose her beloved one in this life. Therefore, it is ideal to die before the husband even if she is an old woman. As is true in most of the world, women in Amdo generally live longer than men do. Tibetan women often wish they would die before their husbands or children do (Tibetan: *sngon chod las*). It is not a big issue for an old woman if her husband dies before her because she does not need to think about remarriage or her future. Usually her children will take care of her, and other people do not discriminate against her. It is a serious matter for a young woman if she lost her husband. Normally a man is unwilling to marry a widow because he is afraid of a rumor that people believe in karma and that a man who marries a widow will die soon.

Young women may have a difficult time after they become widows. In general, a widow has a low status in the Tibetan society, and people try to avoid widows. Some people even believe that a woman becomes a widow if she walks in the shadow of a widow. Villagers often classify widows, and they become a vulnerable group in the society. They have a reduced chance of remarriage, and many people do not want to be friends with them. In some agricultural areas, families of dead husbands often try to control widows because widows need to get permission from their families in order to remarry. Some families also require widows to serve their dead husbands’ families if the families are short of people who can perform labor and if the woman had many children during her marriage.

In many cases, Tibetans allow widows to remarry if they do not have many children. Some widows may voluntarily take care of their parents-in-laws after they have lost their husbands. Some of them may be requested to do so if the husbands’ families and relatives have more power than their own families and relatives. The situation varies from family to family. Many relatives of dead husbands are unconcerned if the widow remarries. Some relatives of dead husbands do not allow widows to remarry. It seems that this is kind of power issue is nothing other than a pure cultural tradition. As Mkhar-‘bum noted:

A widow has to wait for two or more years [in other places it is one year] to remarry. Otherwise, local people criticize her. She may stay with her deceased husband's family if she has a child. If she does not have a child, she returns to her parents' family after she becomes a widow. Sometimes a widow may get married to her deceased husband's younger brother. Although the two families need to discuss this issue, the final decision is made by the widow. That means a widow has the right to reject the proposal. It is important to note that the younger brother may not have a choice since his parents might force him to accept the arrangement. Many widows agree to this solution because they have to consider the needs of their children. They often think that it is difficult to find another good husband, and the uncle of the kids will take good care of the children and/or niece. In a rural village, women do not think much about love, but focus on duty instead. Therefore, some widows stay with their deceased husbands' families without remarriage and look after the old people and young children. Even if a young widow can bring a new husband to the deceased husband's family, the family and the widow will have a good tie and will rely on each other. (Interview, September 2009)

We can gain a picture of levirate marriage (when the brother of a deceased man marries the man's widow) in Tibetan communities through these observations. The ultimate goal of this marriage is to solve the labor shortage and support the family by raising the children. As Grunlan and Mayers (1988) pointed out, "Under this system, if a woman's husband dies and leaves her childless, she must marry her brother-in-law (*levir* in Latin), her husband's brother, to continue the family" (p.150). The Tibetan levirate marriage is different than those described by Grunlan and Mayers because in Amdo, people may practice this system if a woman has a child with her dead husband. It may occur if the dead husband's parents accept the daughter-in-law. This system can reduce the oppression of widows in Tibetan society.

Generally, widows are not welcomed to visit families or to go to other public places. Tibetans strongly prohibit a widow from becoming a maid of honor (at a wedding) and or a midwife. They cannot be very active in any social services or celebrations. For instance, a family will not ask a widow to sing a song during a wedding ceremony even if she is the best singer in the village. A widow has to play a insignificant role in any family celebration or public celebration. Other people may not eat foods made or given by widows, and they often do not accept gifts from widows. Some people may also not talk to a widow in order to avoid bad luck. These extreme reactions are not common, but the attitude toward widows still tends to be conservative. In Tibetan society, widows really have little space compared to other women in the same village. As Dkon-mchog-chos-'phel noted:

Tibetans believe that widow (or *yugs sa*) has widow's impurity (or *yugs grib*). As you know, it is like impurity of cloth and food (or *gos grib*, *zas grib*,⁴⁵) a widower has the same problem. A widow often does not visit homes, does not go under other people's clothes and does not touch other children. She will avoid others to prevent problems. Before others avoid her she will quickly avoid others first. She will recognize her problem. For a widow, it is hard to remarry

⁴⁵ *Grib* is kind of disease caused by impure things such as foods and clothes. Everything including the shadow from a widow is impure for a certain period.

quickly; she might need to wait for several years. After many years there is no problem.
(Interview, October 2010)

Modern men and educated Tibetans are not as discriminating against widows, but their minds are influenced by traditional views and by the families' education. Educated men are also unwilling to marry a widow. I noticed during my fieldwork in a city that many Tibetan men will not eat in a restaurant that is owned by a widow. The same restaurant is very popular among westerners who are working in this city or tourists. Many educated Tibetans know that the two ex-husbands of the restaurant owner died, and they have demonized her. Actually many Tibetans refer to her as "female ghost or devil" (or '*dre mo*') and this shows how a widow's life is not easy in Tibet. This case demonstrates that Amdo Tibetans still keep old traditions in a city and really cannot go beyond their narrow-minded views. In a male-dominated society, widows have a much tougher situation than widowers do.

Widowers may have a better situation than widows. They do not have any barrier to communicating with others or participating in any ceremonies and celebrations. This means that Tibetan men control power and they make rules for the villages. Therefore, they often create higher positions for themselves and put women in lower positions. Men find ways to limit women's freedom or power rather than empowering women in traditional Tibetan society. The biological difference and social orientations profoundly affect widow's lives in Amdo.

14.0 Summary

There are regional variations of the marriage system in Amdo, but all Amdobas follow similar procedures of marriage from marriage negotiation to wedding rituals. Amdobas basically see marriage as the only way to have an heir for a family or group though they practice different marriage structures and choose various mechanisms for arranging marriages.

Although Tibetan-Han intermarriage was encouraged during and after the Chinese Cultural Revolution in order to destroy class and racial boundaries, Tibetans still prefer ethnic endogamy in order to keep their pure blood of Tibetanness. Under certain circumstances, they also encourage cross-cousin marriage to strengthen the tie of alliances because the marriage promotes double protection, and they hope that blood will be thicker after a marriage. Traditionally, a wedding ceremony often formalizes the union of couples. The Tibetan marriage custom has changed for many decades and is still changing because of internal evolution (result of education) and/or outside influence. In particular, from the 1950s to the 1960s, the Chinese government gradually introduced a marriage law to urban and rural Amdobas. This law was reversed in 1980, but its main components have remained. The marriage law mostly has affected the traditional marriageable age and recognition of a marriage in many Tibetan places, if not in all

Tibetan regions. In addition, the Chinese government has launched a One-Child Policy, and the government definitely has an impact on the traditional family structure and the raising of children.

Under the new policy, rural Tibetans are allowed to have three children, and urban Tibetans are allowed to have two children. This extreme implementation of population control policy challenges the Tibetan population, and Tibetans were and are a vulnerable population because of the harsh conditions in which they live and because of their lack of health care facilities. Families have fewer children compared to the past, and this factor certainly tests the form of traditional marriage. Moreover, modern education and modern technology, especially modern transportation or easy mobilization of the population will gradually encroach on the tradition of arranged marriages. There is an increasing trend among young Tibetans to choose their own spouses in both rural and urban areas.

Amdo Tibetans practice three types of marriage: a) family-arranged marriage; b) self-determined marriage without parents' acknowledgement; and c) self-determined marriage with the parent's approval. According to my field observation and research data, the last type is the most prevalent in Amdo today.

To complete the whole cycle of marriage in Amdo is a complicated and time-consuming event. There is no easy way to fully represent the whole cycle in a chapter. In short, the procedures of Tibetan marriage in Amdo are as follows: selection of partner (by parents or oneself), divination, or background investigation, choosing a go-between or matchmaker, initiating a marriage proposal, engagement, discussion of bridewealth and wedding, wedding rituals. A wedding includes procession and welcoming the bride, wedding rituals, and a party. Almost every family has to follow these processes when arranging a marriage. Of course, a family can simplify the procedures and omit some parts of the process. However, the basic or core tradition of a Tibetan marriage has to be maintained.

Outside influences and modernization have had a fundamental impact on Tibetan marriage customs, too. Interactions with other ethnic groups have brought many new elements to marriage arrangements. For instance wedding clothes, gifts, and foods are purchased in the markets rather than being homemade. In some places, local people have kept local customs and have mixed traditional customs with other ethnic groups' traditions. Without a doubt, the most powerful influences come from the Han Chinese culture or from the so-called modern culture.

In terms of legal recognition, most countries of the world limit marriage to two persons of opposite sex, and some of these allow polyamorous marriage. Since 2000, several countries and some other jurisdictions have legalized same-sex marriage, but not in China. In Amdo, same-sex marriage is unimaginable, and homosexual intercourse is unacceptable. Some people may argue that Tibetans have practiced homosexual intercourse since long ago, and their descriptions of the situation are quixotic. As Goldstein, et al. (1999) pointed out: "[I]t became common for monks or monk officials to

satisfy themselves sexually with men or boys by performing the sex act without penetrating an orifice” (p. 27). In the same book, they also mentioned that, “Obvious similarities aside, this ‘homosexuality’ is quite different from homosexuality in Western terms” (p. 28).

Many Tibetans admit that there is homosexual intercourse in private, and recently some Tibetans have discussed gay bars in Lhasa online. However, one thing is sure that there is no legal homosexual marriage in Tibet or Amdo today.

Monogamy is the mainstream form of marriage in Amdo today. Interestingly only a few scholars have observed both polyandry and polygamy in central Tibet, in Khams, and in Amdo. Young Tibetans in Amdo do not know anything about this tradition and they just enjoy the freedom of marriage; they are even content to fulfill their libidos during casual night visits. As in many cultures, infidelity is one reason why people get divorced. These wounds can be healed by new relationships or remarriage. But the scar deep in the heart of a widow is incurable.

PART III

TIBETAN NEW THINKERS: TRADITION AND CHANGE

CHAPTER 5

A BRIEF BACKGROUND

1.0 Introduction

Since the 20th century, many Tibetans have realized that their homeland has faced several critical problems and has reached a crossroads. Where does Tibet need to go in order to have a future? What is the right direction for development in Tibet? Is Tibet's religion a help or a hindrance to its modernization? What does Tibet really need in the 21st century? These questions plague Tibetans living in Tibet as well as Tibetans living in other parts of the world.

As an illustration, a Tibetan friend of mine who is now living in the United States recently brought some of his family members from Tibet to live with him. He described having difficulty speaking with one of the school age family members because that family member only knows Chinese, while he only knows Tibetan and English. This presented several problems when he attempted to enroll the child in school. It is fortunate that my friend lives in an area where Chinese is spoken widely, and the child has been able to get help, when needed, from people in the school system who speak Chinese.

Tibetans and non-Tibetans alike have called on Tibetans to preserve their traditional culture and their unique way of life. On the other hand, the Tibet's reality is more brutal than what anyone has imagined, and this has pushed Tibetans to seek a new strategy for survival. Just how to find the best way to develop Tibetan society raises tough questions for Tibetan scholars.

Regardless of whether Tibetans live abroad or in Tibet, everyone seems to agree that Tibetans need to decide what kind of a Tibet they want. One can easily see the different sides of the question by exploring the different schools of thought. At one extreme, we have the traditionalists who would like to see Tibet's language, culture, and religion preserved, even if that occurs at the expense of modernization. At the other extreme, we have the New Thinkers, who believe that Tibet's backwardness, as they call it, is the very thing that caused Tibet to fall to the Chinese in the first place. They believe Tibet must become a modern nation, even if that means abandoning its traditional religion and culture. To complicate matters further, there are conflicting schools of thought within each of these groups. It is true that the answer probably lies somewhere in between these two extremes. In order to understand that answer, we must examine the different points of view.

Tibetan scholars can be divided into three groups – traditional, moderate, and liberal. Most of the traditional scholars have been educated in monasteries. They support restoring, preserving, and promoting Tibetan culture. This group of scholars wants to

preserve the entire Tibetan traditional culture, to emphasize Buddhism as the core of Tibetan culture, and to recognize that Tibet cannot exist without its religious beliefs and practices. This group strongly believes that Tibet's version of Buddhism must be preserved for its own benefit and that of the rest of the world as well.

It is necessary before I begin this discussion to say something about names. Many Tibetans use only one name, and that is true of some of the writers I will examine. Many writers use multiple names. Whenever possible, I have identified the writers I examine in this study by both their pen names and their given names.

Traditional Tibetan religious beliefs are based in Buddhism, which was introduced into Tibet in the 7th century. The Buddhist principles are combined with the animist Bon tradition, which has its origins in Tibet. The basis of the traditional culture focuses on living a good life now so that the next life is better. Their core beliefs are centered around eliminating suffering for themselves and for all sentient beings. Among the physical representations of these beliefs are the prayer flags, which send prayers into the world when the wind blows on them, and the prayer wheels, which contain thousands of prayers that are sent into the world whenever the wheels are spun.

In traditional Tibetan society, people are taught to trust each other and to take care of each other in order to accumulate good merits for the next life. These principles ensure that people accept that there will be a bad result or punishment if one behaves badly, and there will be a good result or reward if one has performed good deeds. The majority of the Tibetan population accepted these ideas prior to the 1950s. Without a doubt, Tibetans mostly lived for religious or spiritual aims, and they were spiritualists rather than materialists.

The moderate group shares many of the beliefs of the conservative group. They differ in that many of this group's members have enjoyed both the benefits of a modern Chinese education and a deep understanding of traditional culture. The moderates understand that the current situation makes it impossible for Tibet to survive only by preserving its traditional culture. This group supports modernization while still preserving Tibet's traditional culture and religion. In support of this position, Wandai Cairang (2010) quotes A-lags Dor-zhi's (Dor-zhi Gdong-drug-snyems-blo) statement in his report on Tibetcult Web site and elaborates on it by saying, "Tibet should keep the essences of its traditional culture and discard or dump the dregs of its traditional culture and should constantly adapt to change in order to continue but never stop Tibetan culture."

The liberal group comprises the Tibetan New Thinkers and the Tibetan Feminists. (This study only explores the New Thinkers.) The New Thinkers include young, Chinese-educated Amdobas who do not deeply understand traditional culture and who get most of their information and knowledge from Chinese materials and the Internet. The New Thinkers openly criticize traditional culture and question its value. It is their belief that in order for Tibet to survive as a new nation, it must rid itself entirely of its traditional

culture and belief system. I will examine the writings of one of their prominent spokespersons, Zhogs-dung (born 1963; also known by his given name Bka-rgyal and by Taygal), in detail. In his words (2008), “Anyway, it is unavoidable to establish a new secular cultural system which focuses on this life [rather than on the next life]” (p. 217).

This section will investigate questions such as: What events and circumstances gave caused the emergence of the New Thinkers? What are the motivations of the groups who preceded the New Thinkers? What is the New Thinkers’ main argument? What is the reaction of Tibetans toward the New Thinkers? How do the New Thinkers influence Tibet’s youngest, and most activist, generation?

Science: the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment.

Religion: the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.

Buddhism: 1) a widespread Asian religion or philosophy, founded by Gautama in India in the 5th century BCE.

2) Buddhism has no god, and gives a central role to the doctrine of karma. The ‘four noble truths’ of Buddhism state that all existence is suffering, that the cause of suffering is desire, that freedom from suffering is nirvana, and that this is attained through the ‘eightfold path’ of ethical conduct, wisdom, and mental discipline (including meditation). There are two major traditions, Theravada and Mahayana.

Culture: 1) the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively, 2) the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society.

Superstition: 1) excessively credulous belief in and reverence for the supernatural 2) a widely held but irrational belief in supernatural influences, especially as leading to good or bad luck, or a practice based on such a belief.

The purpose of Part III is to understand the background of the New Thinkers, their view, their influence, and the reaction of Tibetans to this particular group.

In this chapter, I am going to present some important factors and influences which played major roles in developing the ideas of the New Thinkers. It will start with a discussion of an old tradition that has captured the minds of Tibetans for centuries and has become a critical target for the New Thinkers.

2.0 Flexible Traditional Vision/Imagination – Taking Refuge from a Protector

There is a Tibetan phrase, “People are changing, but not the time.” This appears to mean that humanity has entered a new era because people have developed new ideas, not because of the passage of time. As Eriksen (2001) stated:

Norms change through time as society changes; some vanish, some are replaced by others, others are reinterpreted, and yet others remain but are accorded reduced importance. Blasphemy, for example, is considered a violation of a norm in many Christian societies, but it is by no means as serious as it was a few hundred years ago. The social power of the church and the symbolic power of Christian dogma have been reduced. (p. 49)

All cultures evolve, and Tibetan culture has been no exception. Tibetans often change the objects and/or people they worship when a new one is introduced. In many ways, Tibetans also practice syncretism, which is the practice of combining seemingly contradictory beliefs, while keep their preexisting norms and traditions along and adding the newer ones. Since the 1950s, many Tibetans have worshipped Mao Zedong (毛泽东 1893–1976).

There is a historic precedent for this belief system. It is a common tradition in Tibet that religious institutions and local families rely on deities to protect them. Tibetans gain solace when they feel that their god is protecting them, although there is no way to gauge the success of the protectors in question.

Traditional scholars have always imagined that the great ancient Tibetan kings were reincarnations of Buddhas and that they introduced and promoted Buddhism in Tibet for the purpose of protecting Tibet. These assumptions later became the legal foundation for Tibet having religious rulers. This belief also applied to many Chinese emperors who had connections to Tibet and its people.

The rulers of the Qing dynasty (清朝 1644–1911) attempted to promote their culture throughout China and required all men to have pigtails, which is a Manchurian tradition. Tibetans were not directly coerced by Manchurian forces, but many Tibetan lamas convinced ordinary people that the emperors of the Manchu (or the Qing dynasty) were reincarnations of Buddhas, and it was quite natural to have pigtails as a sign of respect. As it turns out, many Amdoba men wore pigtails prior to the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and they returned to this practice in the 1980s. Furthermore, Amdobas used to say that their pigtails were a symbolic gift of the Chinese emperor. This tradition shows that Tibetans believe in the protection of a ruler who might be a reincarnation of Buddha. As a result, a dharma king has always ruled Tibet. This ideology coincided with the work other monks did to convince Tibetans that Chairman Mao (Mao Zedong) was a Buddha who would protect them. This acceptance of imagined protection was adopted widely among Tibetans in Amdo, even though some Amdobas rebelled against the idea.

This ruler, Chairman Mao, himself was an atheist, his philosophy is that “Political power comes out of the barrel of a gun,” and his remarkable reputation could not be achieved among Tibetans if his appointed officials did not manipulate members of Tibet’s clergy into convincing the lay population that Mao was a reincarnation of Buddha. This image of Mao as the divine ruler has never vanished from the minds of Tibetans

even though the Chinese Cultural Revolution verified that their divine dear leader, Chairman Mao, was neither a Buddha nor a God.⁴⁶

This seems to be contradictory because the Chinese Communist Party instructed Tibetans not to believe in or practice any religion. However, at the same time, Tibetans were instructed to revere Chairman Mao as a god or protector. There was a joke that can illustrate this point of view. It is said a woman tried to cross a river. She felt that the water would take her away. She loudly called upon Chairman Mao to save her. As the water swept her away, she finally shouted, “How could one rely on an old Chinese man? Lord Buddha, please save my life.” Many lay people believe this is an actual story and not a joke.

This story demonstrates that it is difficult to take away one’s religion or traditional way of thinking under any kind of circumstances. Even though Tibetans were prohibited from practicing their religion, many of them continued to hold their religious beliefs in their hearts. It was possible for the Chinese government to convince many lay Tibetans to abandon their external objects of worship, to abandon worshipping their traditional deities in exchange for worshipping Chairman Mao. It was easy to convince many uneducated Tibetans to do this because they supported the goals of communism, which many of them equated to paradise or heaven. So, it seems that people with strong faith could substitute believing in Chairman Mao and communism for believing in the Buddha and Buddhism. Although some Tibetans claimed that Chairman Mao was the reincarnation of black Mañjuśrī or ‘*Jam-dbyangs-nag-po*,⁴⁷ they could not talk this way during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. In their hearts, many Tibetans believed it. This view or idea came from Tibetan traditional culture, and it is still alive in many Tibetans’ minds.

Buddhist monks, especially *dge bshes*,⁴⁸ understand the pattern of Tibetan psychology, which was forged by their religion. The religious figures spent most of their time examining the human mind and its logic. They understand the local people’s minds and hearts. Therefore, they were able to use their knowledge to change the objects of Tibetans’ belief. It is said that the *dge bshes* deified Chairman Mao as a Buddha and then spread the concept around Amdo with the help of monks and others who had begun to work for the Chinese Communist Party.

⁴⁶ The term God in capital letters is to show respect; the same principle applies to the term Buddha.

⁴⁷ ‘Jam-dbyangs is the Tibetan term of (Skt. *Mañjuśrī*) and is a bodhisattva associated with transcendent wisdom (Skt. *prajñā*) in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Nag po means black in Tibetan and it represents negative things in Tibetan culture and it is opposite to the white color, which is symbol of purity and kindness. Tibetans use Black Mañjuśrī to describe Chairman Mao. Perhaps they mean that he is powerful but brutal.

⁴⁸ The title for a Tibetan Buddhist monk, buddhist *dge slong* who has mastered metaphysics and important branches of sacred literature, person who leads a pure life and is possessed of learning.

As I have mentioned before, it is a tradition for Tibetan lamas or monks to turn an enemy⁴⁹ into not only a friend but also a guru. It is hard to claim that this act of divinization of Chairman Mao was initiated by Chinese government officials (recently Chinese authorities have also required Tibetans to display the portraits of Chinese leaders at homes and monasteries in some Tibetan areas of Amdo) or by Tibetan lamas through their unconscious behavior. However, I remember vividly a very good story about this divinization of Mao. The tale was shared by one of my neighbors in my hometown and by others who also reported the same story when I taught Chinese history at a high school in Rebgong from 1994 to 2003. Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho, an Amdoba, was one Tibetan monk who used to work for the Chinese Nationalist Party before he was recruited by the Communist Party to persuade Buddhists in Amdo to accept the party power and rule. Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho was born in Amdo, and he was later sent back to Amdo to persuade the local people to give up resistance to the Communist Party's administrative power. During his visit to many places in Amdo, he openly declared that Chairman Mao was a reincarnation of a Buddha who was eager to liberate Tibet but not destroy it. Goldstein (1998) also mentioned this Tibetan monk's efforts:

The frustration of those seeking to finesse a *modus vivendi* between Tibetan Buddhism and the socialist ideology of the state is seen somewhat poignantly in two speeches made by Geshe Sherap Gyatso [Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho], a learned "progressive" monk who was a ranking PRC cadre in Qinghai Province. In the first, Sherap Gyatso criticized Tibetans who use Buddhism to further political ends hostile to the CCP, articulating the view that this will lead to the destruction of Buddhism, not its advancement [...] (p. 8)

However, this monk publicly announced that Chairman Mao would bring happiness and wealth to Tibetan men and women. Most Tibetans believed his declaration without question because they thought Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho was a great Tibetan *dge bshes*. The Chinese government might not have been aware of his statement, but it was accepted that Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho convinced Tibetans to accept Chairman Mao as the legal ruler for Tibet.

Today some Tibetans in Amdo still believe that Chairman Mao was a holy person and that he was the reincarnation of black Mañjuśrī. It is startling to see that many families voluntarily hang images of Chairman Mao on the walls of their homes and hope to get his protection. Many Amdobas believe that children will have good dreams and not cry at night if their families hang a photograph of Chairman Mao in the house. Many Tibetan drivers in Amdo have a small photo of Chairman Mao in their cars and they think that his photo will prevent them from having an accident. This is one way that Tibetans have adapted to a new culture and changed their attitude towards their new leader. Replacing the Buddha with Chairman Mao gave them some level of comfort. The basis of this thought is religion and education. It is obvious that the majority of lay people did

⁴⁹ Most Tibetans have heard that the Communist Party is atheist and it will not allow religious freedom. Therefore, Tibetans certainly have fear of Chairman Mao and openly criticize him for being an atheist.

not have much precise knowledge about their own religion and system of reincarnation. They were never seriously concerned about their own rights, which are a very abstract and novel concept for them. Because many lay Tibetans followed the beliefs of their local clergy, they considered anyone who promoted and protected their religion to be the right ruler for Tibet, regardless of whether that person was born in Tibet.

Tibetans strongly assume that lamas and monks can require local protectors to keep their religion and guide the local people, although reality is more ruthless than local folks expected. All Tibetans have a duty to protect the dharma teaching, and Buddhism brings meaningful life to every single Tibetan who adheres to its belief system. Tibetans have to defend their religion, and the religious deities become protectors. As Dge-'dun-shes-rab, a celebrated Tibetan monk from Rebgong put it, "No Tibetan will go to hell after he or she dies because of his or her faith in Buddhism. This makes Tibetans different from others" (Interview, July 2010). Without a doubt, the Tibetan clergy instructs Tibetans to take refuge in the Three Jewels (the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha; the Buddha, the teachings of the Buddha, and the community of Buddhists) so that they will be protected in this life and in future lives. Tibetans feel safe psychologically when they have a protector and advice from the clergy. That said, their protectors may be interchangeable and replaceable under the worst of circumstances.

Tibetans have continually sought one great man to replace Chairman Mao who can become a reincarnation of the Buddha in order to save and protect the dharma⁵⁰ in Tibet. In the 1990s, many Tibetans assumed that the former U.S. President Bill Clinton (born in 1946) was the reincarnation of a famous Tibetan lama, Gung-thang Rinpoche,⁵¹ and that he will save Tibet one day.

This is one recent example of how Tibetans have lived in this imaginary world for centuries and cannot separate from it. Some Tibetans who received a modern education are tired of this tradition and turn to another extreme ideology. They may laugh at those who imagine a man could be the divine ruler for Tibet, and they may be angry about the loss of their land and the repression by another nation. They may not value their

⁵⁰ The body of Buddhist religious doctrine and institutions characteristic of Tibet.

⁵¹ Gung-thang Ripoche is a very important and influential religious figure from Blabrang Bkrashis'kyil monastery. The 3rd Gung-thang Dkon-mchog-bstan-pa'i-sgron-me (1762-1823), was a famous scholar and author of a large number of Buddhist works. His work is entitled *Maxim of water and wood*. The current reincarnation, the 7th Gung-thang Blo-bzang-dge-legs-bstan-pa'i-mkhan-chen was born in 2002 in the Mdzodge village, east of the Gtsos (Chinese: 合作; Pinyin: Hezuo) city, the seat of the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province. The previous reincarnation of Gung-thang, the 6th Gung-thang 'Jigs-med-bstan-pa'i-dbang-phyug (1926-2000) was also influential figure in Amdo and many Tibetans believed that he fought for Tibet. A rumor says that the fifth Gung-thang joked with one of his good friends to indicate he would be reborn as man with yellow hair and blue eyes. He asked his friend "will you recognize me if I come back with yellow hair and blue eyes?" (Tibetans often refer to Caucasians as "yellow heads.") Tibetans also believed that Bill Clinton was strongly concerned about the Tibetan issue and was willing to help Tibet. Therefore, Tibetans made yet another assumption about the reincarnation of a Tibetan lama.

traditional culture, but they struggle for national survival. It is worthwhile to review how these people were educated in their understanding of the world.

3.0 Prominence of Modern Education and the Chinese Cultural Revolution

It is hard to discuss all the changes that have occurred in Tibet since the 1950s in one chapter. However, in order to understand how the New Thinkers evolved and became an influential group at the end of the 20th century, it is important to consider some of the major events of this time. The New Thinkers' attack on traditional culture is not a sudden accident, but it is an explosion of accumulated ideas. The New Thinkers' ideas evolved over time, but they have taken advantage of certain historical events to promulgate their views among Tibet's masses. Their education might also provide an answer as to how Tibetans converted from spiritualism (Buddhism) into materialism (Marxism) during the last century.

Tibetan religious groups had the privilege to control Tibetan education and ideology prior to the Chinese Communist era. Only a few Tibetans in Amdo received any kind of modern education in Chinese schools before the Chinese Communist Party took over power in Amdo in the 1950s. The Chinese Communist government did not immediately challenge religious power in central Tibet, but it established a different level of modern schools in Amdo and Kham in order to educate Tibetans to become comrades of the Communist Party. The Chinese government also recruited Tibetans who were both illiterate and literate to follow its goal of unifying the motherland. The government financially and strategically supported modern education in Tibetan areas in order to change the traditional education system and to reduce the influence of religious authorities in different Tibetan regions. From the 1960s through the 1980s, Tibetan families sent their school age children to boarding schools. The public schools were free, and many families, even though they did not see the value of education, appreciated the economic benefit of having the state provide room and board, and, in some cases, clothing for their children.

Tibetan farmers seemed to be enthusiastic about sending their children to Chinese schools. The nomadic herders were reluctant to do so, and many of them refused. Before the 1980s, Tibetan students who enrolled in modern schools were able to study the Tibetan language, though Tibetan students were still forced to memorize Chairman Mao's words and read stories of Chinese communist heroes. They also received lessons in mathematics from unqualified teachers until they reached middle schools. Middle and high school Tibetan students were introduced to other subjects, including Chinese language and Marxism. Tibetans did not have professionally and officially-designed curriculums until the 1980s.

From middle school through college, the most important subject was "political education," in which Tibetans had to absorb the new worldview of Marxism, materialism,

and Maoism. Everyone was required to study the core view of Marxism with other Chinese political views from primary school up through university. This political education never ends in one's life unless a person gives up any opportunity of receiving a formal education and, consequently, any job offers from the government. Many Tibetans have attempted to pursue a formal education in modern jobs because one of the benefits of doing that was the ability to gain a lifelong position with the government. Obviously, there are benefits to receiving a modern education. For Tibetans in general, many of them learned to develop a questioning attitude. One of the prominent ideas of the Chinese Cultural Revolution was the principle that one should not trust anyone but the Communist Party. The Chinese Communist Party benefitted because lay Tibetans were less likely to follow the dictates of their clergy without question.

Many Tibetan students have had the chance to study the Tibetan language from primary school through university. Some Tibetan students received their education in Mandarin from primary school through high school and were only allowed to study Tibetan when they entered universities. Some students went to schools in Tibetan areas or in Chinese cities where Mandarin has been the only teaching medium, and they received their education in Mandarin from primary school to university. This last group of Tibetans is able to speak in Tibetan, but many of them have difficulty reading or writing it.

During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, which began in 1966, many Tibetans had to stop learning in Tibetan and start learning in Mandarin. A few Tibetan schools in Amdo managed to continue giving lessons in Tibetan even during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The Chinese government aggressively attacked people who held on to the Four Old Things⁵² throughout all of China during this time. Tibetans were forced to give up their beliefs and culture. Many important Tibetan religious figures were sent to prison, and traditional treasure objects or monasteries were destroyed. As Goldstein (1998) noted, "All practice of Buddhism and popular religion was prohibited and effectively eliminated, Tibetans being told over and over that their religion – their gods, lamas, and monks – were primitive and false" (p. 9). Tibetans suffered because they lost their culture and tradition. Goldstein (1998) also pointed out:

Tibetans, therefore, were forced to abandon deeply held values and customs. Although this policy was implemented all over China, because Tibetans' national and cultural identity was so closely associated with Buddhism, the attacks on these struck squarely at Tibetan's core ethnic identity in a way that the destruction of Chinese Buddhism or Christianity did not do for Han Chinese. (p. 10)

Many Amdobas who were present during the Cultural Revolution told me the primary purpose of schools was to educate people to work in government jobs. Because the government was secular, they wanted their workers to be nonbelievers as well. A few

⁵² Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas.

Tibetans secretly practiced their religion during this time. People would not trust others in their schools. Community schools instructed students on class struggle and taught students that anyone could claim a person was an enemy of the people for any reason. Victims of class struggle had to confess in front of Chairman Mao's image for forgiveness.

There were many stories about how a husband accused his wife; a son or daughter accused his or her parents; parents accused their children, disciples accused their masters; and a neighbor accused his or her neighbor in order to survive during the class struggles of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The New Thinkers applied the same strategies to practitioners of Tibet's traditional culture.

Some Tibetans began to doubt their traditional beliefs because the government forced the people to give them up. People had to recite or memorize the words of Mao's works to show their high political consciousness. Everyone received books at schools that were written by Mao to study during politics class and at schools during the period of morning self-learning.⁵³ Memorization and citation of Mao's works provided many student political activist credits of the government. Rdo-rje-tshe-ring, a Tibetan scholar who went to high school during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, confirmed that:

Normally unqualified or nonprofessional teachers had to teach politics and those teachers knew nothing about politics and asked students to read the Selected Works of Mao Zedong during lessons. Students had to be able to cite or memorize some passages from Mao's works. Every morning we also needed to study or read Mao's works regularly. (Interview, October 2011)

Many other communist materials were also available in Tibetan because the government hired Tibetan elites to translate those materials from Chinese into Tibetan. As Stoddard (1994) pointed out:

Religion was eclipsed, and science was introduced: Tibet had launched itself into the translation of an entirely new ideology. This was the second time in Tibetan history that such a feat had been attempted: the importation of Mahayana Buddhism had been admirably accomplished between the 7th and 12th centuries. Now Marxism-Leninism was to be introduced, but in a much shorter period of time. (p. 130)

Tibetans were banned from reading religious materials, which were the only traditional reading resources. Tibetans were also required to condemn those materials as they absorbed the principles of communism. Rdo-rje-tshe-ring also pointed out that, "Struggle,

⁵³ In many Tibetan schools in Amdo, the students had to get up at 5:30 am or 6:00 am to participate in morning exercise, which is usually a running exercise where the groups are divided by different grades. The basic unit for a school is a grade. The students had to spend some time in the classrooms to study before breakfast. Breakfast often takes place around 7:30 am until 8:00am. This period is called morning study because students also need to participate in an evening self-learning class, which is often from 7:00pm to 9:00pm. In this period, students also had to study Mao's works. This way of study started in 1966 and ended in 1976 or later. In current times, students do their homework's or receive some tutoring hours in the evenings during the week.

critique and revolution were the three key words used most often during my high school life” (Interview, October 2011). Every student had the responsibility to report another’s suspicious behavior and discourse to officials or members of the Red Guard in order to gain political points or political advantage. Therefore, it was crucial to watch one’s own speech and behavior in order to avoid any false accusations. Meanwhile, some people sought an opportunity to accuse other innocent victims in order to receive praise and trust from the so-called proletariat. This resulted in many unhappy experiences and unfair treatment of people.

This new stage of modern schools also provided opportunities for the younger Tibetan generation to challenge their own culture, which later became a symbol of backwardness and a barrier for social development, according to the New Thinkers. The leader of the New Thinkers, Zhogs-dung (given name Bkra-rgyal), openly criticized the traditional culture as the key obstacle for the development of Tibetan society. This accusation will be analyzed later on when I examine his writings.

It is important to note that Zhogs-dung, was in high school during the 1980s. He may have been inspired by the practices of the time to be critical of traditional culture. I observed in my own experience from middle school to university that the teachers who taught politics were naturally inclined to attack religion, and many of them believed that people who had faith were stupid and ignorant.

The Chinese Cultural Revolution interrupted regular teaching programs at schools, and students became members of the Red Guard in order to carry out the agenda of class struggle. Schools became a stage for class struggle, and teachers became the target of it. Everyone had to respect Chairman Mao and had to read and recite his quotations as a priority in everyday life. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, wearing an icon of Chairman Mao on the chest was fashionable, and it was a way for a person to demonstrate his or her loyalty to Chairman Mao. The right political direction certainly dominated education during this period. Students also had a chance to participate in criticizing their traditional culture and in destroying buildings such as monasteries and temples. The materialistic viewpoint completely took over the power of spiritualism in Tibet. It was often the students’ task to attack traditional culture and customs. This movement provided an opportunity for Tibetans to study or read materials about Marxism, which was attractive to some young Tibetans. Some capable Tibetan lamas also studied Marxism and agreed with its fundamental arguments.

The group of New Thinkers captured the spirit of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in its attack on traditional culture and in its efforts to create a new worldview. The New Thinkers want to promote a new culture or transplant western philosophy (they think that developed countries have the best or most evolved culture) in Tibet in order to change the current situation.

Today’s Tibetan students are required to take courses in Marxism and other political subjects at schools where they are educated as modern scholars. Those political courses

are taught throughout a Tibetan's entire educational career. They are taught by Chinese instructors who might truly believe in Marxism.

Many of them claimed, as Marx did, that religion was the opiate of the masses. Therefore, according to these teachers, religion is backward and dangerous for the people who believe in it. They certainly accept the Chinese Marxist view that religion is superstition and that it will vanish when humans are advanced into a high level social system, which, they believe, is the communist system. This kind of education has affected and has redirected the thoughts of many Tibetan students who really did not understand or had never practiced religion. Students started to believe that those who believe in religion were uneducated people, and they rejected any education that occurred at monasteries or other religious venues. They began to seek hope from new ideas and concepts including technology, and they rejected religion, thinking all Tibetans would become more pragmatic if they were not restrained by religion. For example, many students assumed that plastic is preferable to natural material before they learned about the effects plastic has on the environment.

Since the 1980s, Tibetan instructors provided lectures about Tibetan language and literature from primary school through university. The contents of textbooks consisted of Tibetan-translated Chinese literature. Tibetan teachers were previously more conservative, and they often emphasized the value of traditional culture, which was dominated by religion. Therefore, Tibetan students often had follow two different paths: Marxism (materialism) or Buddhism (spiritualism). Schools mostly recommended that students follow the footsteps of Marx because the main protector of his philosophy is the Communist Party of China, which successfully rules China. The families of most students hoped that the younger generation would at least have faith in their traditional religion, even though they were not able to study Buddhism in schools.

At most schools, teachers and students did not believe that Chairman Mao was a God or Buddha, although he provided salaries for teachers and free education for students. Any person between the ages of 6 to 30, was able to receive a free education. Generally, Tibetan students who attended Tibetan schools did not have an opportunity to advance in science because there were no teachers who were qualified to teach high school or university-level courses in science. Although many teachers' training schools had been set up to train local young people to be teachers, these schools only trained teachers to teach at the primary and middle school level.

Modern Chinese schoolteachers emphasized the view of historic materialism and criticized religious beliefs. Therefore, young scholars started to question the religious position in Tibetan society as well as the role of traditional culture. People also began to inquire into this perception of backwardness. As one principal of my high school often told us:

Tibetans cannot even make a needle, that is why we are backward and cannot compete with other nationalities in the world. We need to develop the material world rather than focus on

superstition (at that time, people did believe that any kind of worship is superstition). (When I studied at Huangnan Teachers Training School in Rebgong from 1986 to 1989, I heard this kind of statement many times when the school principle gave a speech for whole students).

Even before high school, Tibetan students learned about social evolution, and teachers often told their students that some nations were backward because those societies practiced religion and did not understand science. Although many people, including some teachers, were not aware of science at that time, they often used politically empty phrases such as: “Science is superior to religion. Religion is opium, and science is the real knowledge in which people can get answers to everything.” (Rdo-rje-rgyal, Interview, October 2010). At that time, Tibetan teachers and students believed that science was technology and that advanced weapons were the indicators of development of a powerful nation.

Young Tibetan students dreamed of being scientists in order to save Tibet, though they did not actually have the opportunity to become scientists. The students who attended Tibetan schools did not have the opportunity to study advanced science in China because they lacked Chinese language skills and other university requirements. Many Tibetan students study at universities where they can continue to learn Tibetan language and literature, and Chinese language along with politics. Students were lucky if the open-minded or “new brain” instructors (those who accepted new ideas quickly) were able to teach them different subjects. Tibetan students noticed that there were no opportunities to become scientists and develop weapons of mass destruction. They had to relinquish their dreams of creating concrete weapons, and instead they had to use other means, like literature, to criticize their challenger, the Chinese government. Their school lessons taught them how to categorize people into their friends and enemies. This instruction strongly affected Tibetans’ views.

Many Tibetan students’ minds were partially filled with Marxist ideology, and many of them started to rethink their traditional culture, assuming they knew anything at all about their traditional culture. They also felt pressure from other advanced nations when they examined the material development of their own society. Some of them started to understand why Tibet was perceived as backward. These Tibetans began to use the only acceptable ideology, Marxism, in China to evaluate religion and culture. They believed that only material development would bring hope for Tibet.

It is not surprising that many Tibetans who experienced the Chinese Cultural Revolution declared that there was nothing special about the New Thinkers. What the New Thinkers wanted was a second cultural revolution forged in Tibet, one that would destroy old traditions and beliefs in the new era.

4.0 The 1980s and Educated Youth

Toward the end of the 1970s, China had a new leadership, which launched a new policy of reform and increased openness. These policies opened China up to the outside world and sought to improve China's internal affairs as well. Tibetans welcomed increased religious freedom.

Tibetans began to rebuild their monasteries, and many of them began to practice their religion more openly. Many lamas or *sprul sku* (tulku) were freed from Chinese jails and reestablished their status in the religious community by the spiritual lives of the people in their communities through Buddhist teachings and rituals. Members of the clergy regained their status among the lay Tibetans, and many people resumed their practices of donating some of their wealth to the local monasteries and clergy members. Many lamas were appointed to government positions and played roles in the community's political, religious, and social activities. At the same time, educated Tibetans became critical that the clergy took too much wealth and exerted too much influence over the local populations. People who have the title of reincarnation or *tulku* (the term lama is also used), are often perceived by the people as bodhisattvas who have returned to Earth voluntarily in order to assist others in achieving enlightenment, which is the ultimate goal of Tibetan Buddhism.

During this time, the government decided to hold each individual household responsible for production. This resulted in all rural families signing contracts for farmland or grassland with livestock, which came with the rights and responsibilities of managing the property and livestock. This enabled many individual families to improve the living conditions, and many of them were able to make larger donations to their local clergy.

Students started to visit monasteries to get help with their studies from the local lamas. The residents of the monasteries were often the most educated members of the local communities. Families began to discipline their children according to religious protocols rather than communist ideals. Family members also returned to consulting the local clergy when they faced difficulties or had to make important decisions. The religious point of view teaches that all sentient beings are our mothers, and one should love and take care of every single life. Tibetans may not really be able to practice this Buddhist tradition in daily life, but it affects their behaviors nevertheless.

The New Thinkers observed this increased influence of the clergy on the local population, and may have become jealous that the lamas had more influence over the local population than the intelligentsia did. From 1979 through the 1980s, Chinese-educated Tibetans felt a sense of urgency to reform Tibetan society, believing that Tibetan society was behind other nations. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), who coined the phrase, "survival of the fittest," became very popular among Chinese elites. The quotation is quoted frequently by many Chinese scholars as well as by Tibetan scholars, although they often give credit for the quotation to Charles Darwin. As Wang Xiaodong,

one of a new breed of Chinese nationalists, informed Leonard (2008), “many Beijing intellectuals in the 1980s saw the Chinese people as an inferior nation with an inferior history” (p.13). Many Tibetan intellectuals felt the same way in the 1980s and 1990s, and the New Thinkers still feel the same way today.

The New Thinkers were at least somewhat knowledgeable about Buddhist teachings. It is hard to measure the level of their understanding of Buddhism, but it is clear that they studied Buddhism along with Marxism. For this reason, the New Thinkers could not totally depart from religious concepts, although some of them claimed to be atheists. They had to live under a religious shadow in order to survive in Tibetan society, where most people claim to be Buddhists. In fact, they never departed from religious influence.⁵⁴

However, the New Thinkers also claim that religion is a barrier to development, and they are starting to rethink their accusations because other Tibetans have challenged their perceptions. The New Thinkers attempt to seek sympathy or support from other Tibetans in order to make a valid argument for their positions. They are finding new strategies to explain Tibet’s backwardness so that they can understand how external elements have impacted Tibetan society and its reaction to this influence over the last 60 years. This issue will be briefly addressed later on in this section. It is likely that Zhogs-dung’s ideas were developed during his university life because some of his schoolmates were challenging Tibetan culture and old traditions in the 1980s.

5.0 The Tibetan Department of the Northwest University for Nationalities⁵⁵

The Tibetan Department of the Northwest University for Nationalities was, and is, one of the most important places where Tibetan students have gone to acquire new ideas and challenge traditional beliefs. While many Tibetans have enjoyed a modern education, many educated Tibetans disagree with the tenets of Marxism because they assume that Marxism is a negative theory because most western societies have abandoned it. That is the reason why Tibetan materialists often deny the influence of Marxism in their ideas.

⁵⁴ There is a religious shrine at the vanguard of the New Thinker’s home, though he argues that his spouse owns it and that it has nothing to do with him. Other New Thinkers could not deny their conscious or unconscious faith because they never changed the faith of their own family members. It is ironic that their family members are strong religious supporters.

⁵⁵ Established in August 1950, Northwest University for Nationalities (Xibei minzu daxue zangxue xi, yuan Xibei minzu xueyuan zangyu xi 西北民族大学藏学系, 原西北民族学院藏语系), directly under the leadership of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, is the first minorities’ university following the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Based in northwest China, the university enrolls its students from 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, with a total number of 16,000 students of 46 nationalities on campus now. There are 21 faculties and departments: Economics & Administration Faculty, Language & Cultural Spreading Faculty, Foreign Languages & Literature Faculty, Tibetan Language & Literature Faculty, Mongolian Language & Literature Faculty. Retrieved on June 6th 2011 from: <http://dwzy.xbmu.edu.cn/english/1.asp> (This website is no longer available.)

Not all Tibetans think this way; A-lags Dor-zhi, a professor and a reincarnated lama, claimed there is some similarity between the philosophies of Buddhism and Marxism, and he accepted the tenets of Marxism even when he was recognized as a reincarnation in the 1980s.

Many Tibetan scholars have believed that the Tibetan Department of The Northwest University for Nationalities in Lanzhou 兰州 has been responsible for educating the more radical Tibetan students during the late 1970s and 1980s. The Northwest University for Nationalities was established in 1950. The Chinese government revised the college entrance examination at the end of the 1970s, and many Tibetans took the examination in an effort to get a higher education. The Tibetan students with the highest scores were admitted to the university because it was a part of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission (Guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui 国家民族事务委员会). Tibetan students were mainly from the Gansu 甘肃 and Mtshosngon (Qinghai 青海) provinces, and they often received lessons in both Tibetan and Chinese at this university.

It is interesting to note the different language proficiencies of the Tibetan students depending on the regions of Tibet they came from. Students from Gansu had weak Tibetan language skills and very strong Chinese language skills. In contrast, students from Qinghai had strong Tibetan language skills and weak Chinese language skills. In general, students from rural areas were knowledgeable in the Tibetan language, but their Chinese language skills were quite weak. Students from towns were the opposite of rural students. Some students were equally proficient in both languages. At that time, many unqualified *Han* Chinese 汉族 taught Tibetan to students who were more knowledgeable in Tibetan language and literature than their teachers. As a former student, Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs, pointed out:

One thing that was significant at the time was that there were many Chinese teachers at the Tibetan Department of the university. Many Chinese teachers did not have the language skills they needed to teach Tibetan language or literature. A large number of Tibetan students had better knowledge of Tibetan language than their Chinese teachers. Therefore, the students challenged their teachers, and gradually the teachers tolerated students' challenges. Teachers also developed patience and broadened their minds to admit their own weaknesses. Later this challenge became a tradition of the Department of Tibet Studies. Students could speak out about different issues and were, thus, able to expand their ideas. These factors also influenced Zhogs-dung as well. (Interview, June 2010)

The weakness of the teachers encouraged students to challenge them in classes, and some students tried to humiliate a few Han Chinese teachers who had trouble handling their duties. Some of the Chinese teachers who taught Tibetan language and literature felt the pressure because their students were often more familiar with Tibetan language and literature than they were. This unusual situation provided students more free time to read Chinese versions of western books. This resulted in Tibetan students becoming more interested in western philosophy in the same way the Chinese scholars did. Tibetan students not only challenged teachers in classes, but they also competed with each other

in terms of who was more knowledgeable about western philosophy. As Pad-ma-'bum, a former student of the university in the 1980s, pointed out:

A few Tibetan teachers might introduce western philosophy to Tibetan students, but the main influence was from Chinese books, which were read by Tibetan students. One would be ashamed if one could not say few names of western writers or philosophers at that time. (Interview, July 2010)

Hungchen, another former student of the university in 1980s, also confirmed:

In the 1980s, the Tibetan teachers and students at The Northwest University for Nationalities started to absorb western philosophy. For example, one would be ashamed if one could not name few western philosophers and their works. (Interview, June 2010)

Even today, the students at Northwestern University for Nationalities (the term “nationalities” is used in China to denote ethnic minorities) tend to be different from other Tibetan college students who are only interested in becoming qualified for future jobs. Students from this university today are more open and active. One of my sources of information mentions, “several students from this school have been detained recently because they were seeking opportunities for free thinking along with free speech and political freedom” (Interview, June 2010).

Many people argue that the location of the Northwest University for Nationalities is also a factor that heavily influences students’ minds. There is another university of nationalities⁵⁶ that has a Tibetan department in Ziling (Xining 西宁) City, and it has many Tibetan students from Mtshosngon (Qinghai). This Tibetan department has focused on promoting traditional culture, and it later earned the nickname, “a wreck of a monastery in a city.” Some Tibetan scholars feel that the Tibetan Department of the Northwestern University for Nationalities has in place a more liberal teaching tradition, while the Qinghai University for Nationalities used a traditional teaching system, emphasizing memorization and relying on the absolute authority of teachers.

In Lanzhou, Tibetan students have often worn more fashionable clothes than the students in Ziling City. The new ideas from books and teachings also began to affect many Tibetan students in Lanzhou before the Chinese students’ movement failed in 1989. Hungchen studied in Lanzhou in the 1980s and he said:

Obviously, the development of Ziling City has been behind Lanzhou by at least 10 years for many decades. For instance, one can see the difference from what kind of clothes people wear in the two cities. (Interview, June 2010)

⁵⁶ There are four universities for nationalities outside Tibet proper, and Tibetan students who go to Tibetan schools can study at those four universities because of their language skills. They are: Central University of Nationalities in Beijing, Southwestern University of Nationalities in Chengdu, Northwestern University of Nationalities in Lanzhou and Qinghai University of Nationalities in Xining. In the 1980s and 1990s, most Tibetan students who studied in the Tibetan language could go to the latter two universities and a few could enroll in the first one.

A Tibetan scholar, Rdo-rje-tshe-ring also mentioned:

I was a junior at the university. A Tibetan student gave a presentation to attack old Tibetan literature theory and traditional culture. He was so aggressive during his speech. His two hands were toughly put together, and he made strange gestures. He shouted “I will cut the neck of the traditional culture.” He really cut the neck to kill it if the culture were a living being. Seems he got crazy on the stage. He really had strong feelings if he wanted to challenge Tibetan traditional values and culture. (Interview, October 2009)

This Tibetan student, Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs, later became Zhogs-dung’s best friend and one of Tibet’s New Thinkers. The variation of teaching styles and social environment had different effects on Tibetan students who went to those two universities. Pad-ma-‘bum, a Tibetan researcher who studied at this university in 1980s, mentioned:

The teachers affect the students. For instance, A-lags Dor-zhi, a Tibetan professor in Lanzhou, was an open-minded teacher at that time. He often talked about the ideas of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. He liked to read the works of western philosophers, and he shared his knowledge with his students. In Xining [Ziling], teachers were tradition-oriented, and they often focused on grammar and traditional verses. (Interview, July 2010)

This open-minded Tibetan lama, or professor, A-lags Dor-zhi (b. 1936), was a strong influence on his students though he was not completely free from traditional values, but his new knowledge influenced many of his students including Zhogs-dung.

Former students of this university have often been proud of its long tradition, which is a new way of thinking, and this differs significantly from the traditional way of thinking. As Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs said, “This university created a free environment for its students to express their opinions. The students were brave enough to challenge the teachers” (Interview, June 2010).

Today, the Tibetan Department of the Northwestern University for Nationalities is quite different from the way it was in the 1980s. Most of the faculty members are Tibetan, and they do have advanced knowledge of Tibetan language and literature. Bdud-lha-rgyal, a professor in Tibetan literature, is the important figure who spreads new ideas among Tibetan students at this university.

However, many Tibetans today are very concerned about their future jobs and believe that Chinese is the “lingua franca.” They believe one cannot get a job from the government unless one has mastered the Chinese language. In Tibet, as well as in all of China, people think that education will be helpful in getting a good job and getting out of poverty. Stable employment is the ultimate goal of becoming educated. Young Tibetans are no exception, and they often work very hard at studying Chinese from middle school on. A few students still are proud of their own language, and they hold high the flag of Tibetan nationalism in order to carry on their dream, which is to build a strong and powerful Tibet.

6.0 Rising Tibetan Nationalism

There are several reasons for the revival of Tibetan nationalism at universities in China. Advanced technology allowed students to access information about the outside world, even though the Chinese government censors the Internet heavily. This influx of information allows students to know about different movements around the world. Certainly, Tibetans realize that there are many problems facing the world and that there are very few solutions for addressing them.

The rise of nationalism is a big problem for world peace and cooperation. Ethnocentricity, the belief that one's country, culture, and ethnicity is better than another's seems to be a universal condition. Neither Chinese nor Tibetans are immune from this. Chinese people are very emotional, and their feelings of nationalism become apparent whenever China is criticized by international communities. A good example of an event that provoked nationalism for both Chinese and Tibetans was the Olympic Games in 2008 in Beijing. The Chinese people were proud of being able to hold such an important international event in China. However, China's policies toward Tibet became the object of criticism of the international community. As a result, the Torch Run was greeted by demonstrations by the Tibetan Diaspora and its supporters in every city it visited.

Tibetan nationalism will become stronger if Chinese nationalism rises for any reason. Tibetans think that Tibet is a weak nation that is under threat. Activists try to incite Tibetan nationalism both within China and among members of the exile community.

Chinese and Tibetan students live alongside each other in China's universities. Han Chinese students often become the majority of college students in China whether the universities have title of nationalities (i.e. ethnic minorities) or not.

China has a tradition of discriminating against the people of surrounding nations. Historically, China has called its neighbors "barbarians." Today, Han Chinese people stereotype outsiders, calling them backward and foolish, and they label Tibetans as "dirty." Coincidentally, the Chinese term dirty (Zang 脏) has a similar pronunciation as the Chinese term for Tibet (Zang 藏), and some radical Han Chinese use similar words to ridicule Tibetans. Han Chinese consider themselves to be civilized people, while they consider other people to be uncivilized. They think they have the right or power to civilize what they perceive to be barbarians. To some extent, this mentality of Han Chinese people still exists today. Some Chinese students naturally assume that they are superior to Tibetans and other ethnic minorities. There is visible and invisible conflict when different students interact at colleges or in other locations.

When I was a college student, several group fights broke out between Tibetan and Han Chinese students at my school because of discrimination. One of the Chinese students at my school told me that as a child her parents used to threaten to give her to a Tibetan if she continued to cry, claiming that Tibetans ate babies. She thought Tibetans were wrathful and ugly until she became friends with Tibetans when she was at the

university. Certainly, Tibetan and Chinese students do become friends and engage in an honest exchange of ideas. However, Tibetans perceive Han Chinese as faithless and untrustworthy. They also think that Chinese are unclean because they eat dog meat. Therefore, in general, the interaction between Tibetans and Chinese is problematic because of misunderstandings and prejudices. Sometimes intolerance leads to hatred and results in both Tibetan and Chinese nationalism. This situation has become worse after the Tibetan protests in 2008, openly showing their disagreement with the way Chinese local administrators dealt with their issues.

All of these problems show the failure of education in addressing the equality of all people, even though it had the potential to create an environment for open and trustworthy communication. Some believe that the state media has failed to report actual events fairly and even that the state media is ultimately responsible for having created conflict between Tibetans and Han Chinese. It is hard to say that this was purposeful or unpredictable. However, Tibetans expressed their concerns and protested forcefully. These actions opened many people's eyes and demonstrated the strength of protest movements.

Gradually, nationalism and national conflict attracted the hearts of many young Tibetans. Today's young generation does not only see the internal symptoms of Tibetan culture, but it also vaguely realizes the external pressure on them which is mainly represented by the way in which the Chinese government controls Tibetans and the way the Han Chinese discriminate against them. Therefore, it is not surprising to see some resistance among Tibetans in recent years as Tibetan nationalism has risen, and Tibetans were pushed to take actions. As a Tibetan scholar observed:

Now it seems that Tibetans unified as a nation are fighting for its fate. Tibetans from three regions [central Tibet, Kham, and Amdo] are recognized as the same nation and they emphasize this national entity. Before, Tibetans only had strong sense of different region and territory, but now we found the sense of nation and we focus on it. (Interview, July 2010)

This statement and interviews with other people confirm that today's Tibetans attempt to act as a nation, but they still have a long way to reach their goal. Others still think that religion, rather than nationalism, is the core thread that ties Tibetans together. However, the New Thinkers also learned much from the first phase of the Chinese May Fourth Movement (Chinese: 五四运动; pinyin: Wusi yundong), which was a part of Chinese nationalism movement in the 20th century.

7.0 Inspiration of the May Fourth Movement and Chinese Elites

The New Thinkers insinuate that Tibet needs some kind of movement, similar to the Chinese May Fourth Movement. The May Fourth Movement was a significant historical and political movement in China. On May 4th, 1919, in Beijing, the Chinese students

organized a political movement against international imperialism and the Chinese feudal system, specifically protesting the Chinese government's weak response to the Treaty of Versailles, especially the Shandong Problem. This movement was known as the May Fourth Movement. The event is observed in China today as Youth Day. The broader use of the term May Fourth Movement often refers to the period during 1915-1921, usually called the New Culture Movement (Chinese: 新文化运动; pinyin: Xin wenhua yundong). During this period, many Chinese scholars began to lead a revolt against the core of Chinese traditional culture, Confucian culture. They called for the creation of a new Chinese culture based on western standards, especially democracy and science. Thousands of students followed their lead to promote democratic and egalitarian values, develop critical thinking, reexamine traditional culture, use vernacular literature, and encourage an orientation toward the future rather than toward the past. One New Thinker, Phag-mo-bkra-shis, agreed that the New Thinkers were inspired by part of the May Fourth Movement and he understood the movement in this way:

There is a general assumption about the May Fourth Movement [among Tibetans]. Many people think that the May Fourth Movement destroyed or subverted everything. Nowadays, people understand it partially but not comprehensively. At that time, how did we [the New Thinkers] understand the May Fourth Movement? There were two stages of the May Fourth Movement. There was the cultural movement of the May Fourth Movement and the revolutionary movement of it. The first stage of the May Fourth Movement is the cultural movement, and that is not the base for our thought but it is one of our orientations. The May Fourth Movement in 1919 is the revolutionary movement, and that aimed to destroy things. We only appreciate the first stage of the movement [as New Thinkers]. (Interview, July 2010)

Another Tibetan new thinker, Gcod-pa-klu-rgyal, also confirmed: "Surely, his [Zhogs-dung] views were 100 percent influenced by the Chinese May Fourth Movement [New Cultural Movement] and European Enlightenment thinkers" (Interview, July 2010).

It is hard to generalize the scale of free thinking in Tibet as assumed by the Tibetan New Thinkers. Many Tibetans returned to their traditional culture and religion only two or three decades ago, and many of them consider Tibetan culture and religion to be national treasures. For them, it is not easy for Tibetans to want to damage their culture and religion again because of what they experienced during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. This radical movement did not benefit Tibet but instead caused Tibet to lose traditional culture and practices. It is true that many ordinary Tibetans were not aware of the May Fourth Movement, especially during the first stage of this movement.

The New Thinkers often borrowed ideas from the Chinese elites. For instance, they chose Hu Shi (胡适 1891-1962), a Chinese philosopher and scholar, as their model for liberalizing Tibetan culture. Hu Shi became a key figure of the New Culture Movement (1915-1920) because of his advocacy for Chinese language reform. Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) and John Dewey (1859-1952) were strong influences for Hu Shi's ideas. Hu Shi propagated liberalism and asserted skepticism. His ideas have attracted the interest of the New Thinkers, and many of them idolize him. Hu Shi promoted democracy

and science in *New Youth* (Chinese:新青年; pinyin: Xin Qingnian), which was an influential Chinese revolutionary magazine in the 1920s, and this played an important role during the May Fourth Movement.

Interestingly, the New Thinkers have initiated an online journal called *Na gzhon gsar ba* (*New Youth*) to promote their liberal ideas. It is obvious that the New Thinkers are imitating the Chinese liberalists and evolutionists of the 1920s. “Natural selection” and “survival of the fittest” are the two mostly frequently quoted phrases borrowed from the west, and the influence of these two phrases is profound. Both westernized Chinese scholars in the 1920s and the New Thinkers in the 1990s thought that the elites in a society could have the best wisdom of a nation and that they could assist a nation in evolving their culture or society in a direction that could ensure its survival. The shadow of Darwinism and evolution dominated their thoughts and arguments. The New Thinkers picked those phrases out of Chinese books and spread them among Tibetans. Western-educated Chinese scholars certainly consumed those ideas directly from western books and spread those phrases through their efforts to translate those works.

The New Thinkers have never undertaken any scientific research to examine the problems and difficulties of Tibetan society; they use western norms or standards to measure Tibetan culture. They do this though they may not understand western philosophy, and a few of them have only played words games using jargon from western philosophers. Yon-tan, argued:

They have never been trained in those fields [philosophy, sociology, development, etc.], but they read a few books about western philosophy. They mostly copy ideas from a contemporary Chinese scholar, Yu Jie [余杰 b. 1973], who is a scholar at Beijing University (北京大学 Beijing Daxue) and who wrote many articles about his new thought. (Interview, August, 2010)

The ideas of the New Thinkers reflect a few contemporary Chinese scholars such as Yu Jie and Mo Luo (摩罗 b. 1961). Yu jie is a Chinese religious rights activist, and Mo Luo is a Chinese literature critic; the former promotes western ideology and the latter is critical of the nature of Chinese current intellectuals’ slavery to the Chinese government. In addition to espousing that most Tibetans are slaves to their religion, the New Thinkers also bring up the Tibetan tradition of serfdom in their criticism of modern-day Tibetans. A Tibetan new thinker, Gcod-pa-klu-rgyal, observed:

There is influence from Yu Jie and Mo Luo. [It is] mostly critical thinking. Many people cannot say what they think aloud. But Mr. Zhogs-dung can say what is in his heart [or mind]. It is not just that what he thinks but also he can take action. This kind of brave mind and critical thinking influence them [the New Thinkers]. There is influence. That must be admitted. (Interview, July 2010)

These two Chinese activists have been unsatisfied with Chinese traditional culture and are critical about China’s traditional culture. Nyi-gzhon (given name Phag-mo-bkra-shis) wrote: “For example, today two young Chinese students, Yu Jie and Mo Luo, at Beijing

University suggest to ‘take off the skin of Chinese traditional culture’ ” (p. 11). Yu Jie converted to Christianity and has fought for religious freedom since 2003. There is a rumor in Amdo that the New Thinkers thought he was a nonbeliever and admired his ideas. They abandoned him after they found out that he was a religious believer.

However, the May Fourth Movement turned this cultural movement into a political one. This political event still affects thousands of youth in China because there is a tradition in China that many Chinese schools celebrate this day in different forms. The schools often organize art performances and writing competitions in order to commemorate the May Fourth Movement. Tibetan schools in China celebrate this day the same way that the Chinese schools do. Many students may not know what actually happened in 1919 or even why they are supposed to honor this day. They do know from their experience that they have a half-day holiday and that the school often brings performance teams to join competitions at different levels of government. The media has an obligation to report those celebration performances and to publish articles to recall the historical meaning of this day and praise the power of Chinese youth. There is no doubt that the New Thinkers have observed every anniversary of this Chinese political movement and that this movement has inspired them for many years.

8.0 Inspirations of Western Philosophy in Chinese Books

In the 1980s, before the 1989 Tiananmen Square Students Movement, Chinese scholars were granted the freedom to translate western literature such as novels, poems, and philosophy books into Chinese. The influx of these works influenced Tibetans who could read Chinese. Those who read these works absorbed basic western values such as freedom, democracy, and individualism, and they also learned certain western philosophical terms. Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs described it this way:

As you know a new way of thinking was given to people by the social environment or policies in the 1980s. [People] saw many things that had never been seen before and opened a door to see outside. [They] could not see the world as a whole, but they saw few things gradually. In the 1980s, the door was opened, and [we] had a look at outside world. This is my point; at that time, people like Zhogs-dung looked outside and then compared themselves to the outside [world] and found out or realized the situation of themselves as persons and Tibetans as an ethnic group. (Interview, July 2010)

Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs’ argument demonstrates that Tibetans who read the western translations looked within themselves after observing the progress of other countries in the 1980s. At the same time, Chinese scholars debated whether western civilization was superior to traditional Chinese culture. Leonard (2008) mentioned that in China, “For good or for ill, modernization became synonymous with Americanization in the 1980s and 1990s” (p.12). In the same book, Leonard quoted the following argument made by the Chinese political scientist, Yu Keping: “The American dream is the highest ideal for

the young generation that grew up since the reforms. Everything in the USA, including American people, institutions, economy, culture, and country, is so perfect that the American moon has become more round than the one in China” (p.13). A Tibetan scholar, Pad-ma-‘bum, described the situation in a similar way:

The Chinese scholars tried to accept western philosophy because they think the western culture emphasizes individual or self and the eastern culture emphasizes collective and group. Chinese scholars had the ambition to adopt western culture at that time in China. They began to examine Chinese traditional culture and western culture. They found the difference between western and eastern culture. Western society has freedom because they respect or emphasize individualism. (Interview, July 2010)

Tibetan college students were keen to read the debate among Chinese scholars in the 1980s, and they learned why the liberal Chinese scholars accepted western ideas. Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs noted that:

Tibetans read books in Chinese and talked about their own feelings regarding western ideas. People often discussed those things at that time. The only problem was that no one took action to write about those thoughts. (Interview, July 2010)

Not all Tibetan college students were interested in the ideas of the western elites. Most Tibetan students continued to follow a traditional course of learning and focused on the study of traditional literature.⁵⁷ As Pad-ma-‘bum, a Tibetan scholar, who now lives in a western country and taught Tibetan literature at a university in Lanzhou in the 1980s recalled:

I once visited the Qinghai University for Nationalities (Qinghai minzu xue yuan 青海民族学院) and observed that there was a very close tie between the teachers and students. It seems that their relationship is similar to the traditional relationship of the master and disciple. Both teachers and students mainly focused on traditional knowledge. (Interview, July 2010)

This comment shows that many Tibetan college students did not have the opportunity to learn western ideas because their teachers had the authority to direct the students. As the result of focusing on traditional literature, many students were weak in their knowledge of the Chinese language, and they were unable to absorb new ideas from Chinese translations of western books. Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that the Northwest University for Nationalities is the one most often identified with the Tibetan New Thinkers.

⁵⁷ Most Tibetan college students study Tibetan language and literature. Only a few Tibetans who studied Tibetan language in high school are able to pursue a college degree in other fields.

9.0 The Dawn of New Thought in Amdo

The Tibetan New Thinkers have tried to find their ancestors and establish their lineage in the same way that Buddhist sects trace the lineages of their lamas to ancient Indian gurus or great Tibetan masters. They search for a master who could be a guru of the New Thinkers in Tibet and they insist that Dge-'dun-chos-'phel⁵⁸ (1903?-1951) and Don-grub-rgyal⁵⁹ (1953-1985) were at the forefront of introducing the New Thinkers' ideas into Tibetan thought.

As a member of Tibetan new thinkers, 'Gayn Sangs-rgyas-don-grub (2008) praised these two Tibetans as pioneers for the spirit of secular culture in Tibet (p. 245). In fact, Don-grub-rgyal introduced new writing styles to Tibetans in the 1980s and Dge-'dun-chos-'phel became an exceptional Tibetan scholar because of his experiences abroad, mainly in India. Neither Dge-'dun-chos-'phel nor Don-grub-rgyal developed a spirit of antireligion or antitraditional culture, although both were critical of certain issues in Tibet. Many Tibetans believed that these two people never wanted to destroy traditional culture, although their works criticized some negative phenomena⁶⁰ in Tibetan society, and they wished Tibet had become a strong nation. As Ljang-bu, one friend of Don-grub-rgyal, observed, "He [Don-grub-rgyal] really loved Tibetan traditional culture and worries about its preservation. He thought that the new culture or ideology would flood into Tibet, and Tibet would lose what it had" (Interview, October 2009).

A common thought among Tibetans is the hope that Tibet will become prosperous and progress materially because Tibet is in decline even though it built a rich spiritual culture many centuries ago. In order to ensure the survival of Tibet, many Tibetan students claimed it was urgent to change the direction of Tibetan society, and some of them started to criticize traditional culture. They often expressed their opinions in articles and essays. Three important figures, Mkharr-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis (a TV host in Amdo), Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs (TV and radio program translator in Amdo) and 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje (from 2012, vice governor of Kanlho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture), from Amdo, actually opened the door to the revolution of thought in Amdo,

⁵⁸He was the first "modern" scholar of Tibet. He was the first who not only completed a traditional Tibetan education, but who also was courageous enough to leave the monastic society, to travel abroad, to learn several new languages and to deepen his knowledge by collaborating with scholars of different nationalities. Dge-'dun-chos-'phel was known in Tibet as a brilliant scholar, a talented artist, a highly gifted poet, an excellent translator, and a skillful dialectician. Yet he was also well-known for his nonconformity which turned him into a highly controversial figure in Tibetan society. (Retrieved in October 2010. <http://www.paljorpublications.com/item.aspx?id=163>)

⁵⁹Many Tibetans believed that he was the founder of modern Tibetan literature. He was born in a small village in Dgurong, Amdo in 1953. In 1979, he enrolled at Beijing Central University of Nationalities. A prolific writer, scholar, and poet, he committed suicide in 1985 at the age of 32. He made a will before his death and he mentioned that he wanted his death to awaken Tibetans.

⁶⁰The former criticized the decadent life of Tibetan nobles and highlighted the problems of the Tibetan Government in the early 19th century, while the latter targeted fake reincarnations and their nonvirtuous behaviors.

and possibly in all of Tibet. Only Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs has become a member of the New Thinkers so far.

9.1 Three Valiant Authors

Mkhar-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis' university graduate thesis "briefly touched on Tibetan Traditional Culture and Contemporary Concept"(1988), (*Srol rgyun rig gnas dang deng skabs 'du shes skor rags tsam gleng ba*), which he wrote at the Northwest University for Nationalities. The thesis criticized traditional culture publicly from the perspectives of a free man and an insider. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Tibetans were forced to condemn their religion and traditions in public. His thesis appeared in a journal named *rtser snyeg*⁶¹ (*Climb Up*) in 1990. He attacked traditional culture from an evolutionist viewpoint. For example, he applied Lewis Henry Morgan's (1818-1881) three stages of social progress (savage, barbaric, and civilized) to measure a society, and he was also influenced by Marx's domain concept model of production. Mkhar-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis concerns himself with the survival of Tibet as a nation and as an ethnic group in a new era. In 1990, he wrote:

The idea of the writer is that today we have reached a particular time in which we have to reevaluate [reexamine] our traditional culture. The reason for this whether the nation can survive or move ahead is directly related to how a nation reflects on its culture and summarizes its culture. (p. 49)

Mkhar-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis' reflection of Tibetan culture is that the traditional culture is filled with backward, negative elements, which have been borrowed from Indian culture. Therefore, it is crucial to deny traditional culture in order to invent a new culture for Tibet and to build a new system of philosophy (pp.49-51). Mkhar-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis also dreamed that Tibetan intellectuals might have the ability to lead Tibet toward achieving this goal since they already realized that the development of western nations inspired Tibetans to follow western values rather than Buddhist values.

In Mkhar-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis' words in 1990, "If we practice the thought of traditional culture (cause and effect, compassion, discard desire, and emptiness), there is a big obstacle to our lives and survival" (p.52). This author admired a human-centered culture, and he declared that western culture is forward-looking, and represents materialism, individualism, democracy, and science. However, Mkhar-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis only perceived the benefit of developing the material world, and he ignored the importance of spirituality. In addition, he employed the notion of evolution to attack traditional culture, although several decades prior to this article, Tibetan society was already integrated into the so-called Chinese socialist system, which precedes any preexisting social system according to Marxism. Since the 1950s, all Tibetan areas within

⁶¹This journal belongs to the College of Communist Party of Qinghai.

the People's Republic of China were brought into a "socialist line" one after another. The problem for Tibetan scholars is that they often do not distinguish between society and culture; they are unable to examine the current worldwide and domestic situation. They make many assumptions about both, and they often imitate the views of Han Chinese scholars.

Today, religion does not have the power to establish a way to control people's education and minds. Even before the so-called the "liberation" of Tibet, in 1951, religion was unable to change the mode of production in Amdo. Many Tibetan scholars imagined that there had been a conflict between reality and traditional culture. This notion of conflict might have been borrowed from Marxism, and people often unconsciously use this term incorrectly. Furthermore, Tibetan scholars argue that Tibet can become a wealthy and powerful nation by repeating the historical experiences of wealthy and powerful western nations. In other words, Tibet can develop through modernization, which has become the priority of the Chinese government since 1949.

Tibetan scholars did not realize the fact that Tibet was systematically less developed for many reasons originating both inside and outside of Tibet. This issue has arisen recently in many Tibetans' minds. Some think that a discussion of reality may cause many problems, while others simply believe that it is useless to talk about the development of Tibet.

Many scholars think that importing western experiences and ideas could lead Tibet into a new epoch. This notion became the focus of Tibetan literature. Tibetan New Thinkers and scholars are interested in western culture, which they learned mostly from Chinese books, and they imagine that western culture is a paradise for human beings because they have read books about it. In contrast, many western people are astonished by Buddhist teachings, which were often given by Tibetan lamas and their followers. It is unfortunate that many of those who follow the teachings of lamas who have set up centers in the West are ignorant of the fact that many Tibetans in Tibet are suffering profoundly. They fail to recognize the deplorable conditions that exist for most Tibetans living in Tibet.

Another Tibetan, Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs (pen name Byang-skar), studied at the Northwestern University for Nationalities in the 1980s and was a classmate of Mkharr-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis. He completed his thesis, "Poetry and the Mirror of Poetry" (1988, *Snyan ngag dang "snyan ngang me longma"*), regarding the theory of traditional poetry. It is common knowledge for Tibetans that the theory of traditional poetry was borrowed from Indian literature. However, Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs tried to challenge the authority of Tibetan traditional literature theory because he thought that traditional literature theory has prevented the free expression of Tibet's writers. He (1994) wrote, "This theory [*The mirror of poetry*] is backward and baseless for practice. [...] our heavy task is to seek a new theory for contemporary literature from our practice/experience" (p. 27).

The tone of his article urged Tibetans to find themselves as individuals and then find a new theory for literature. Both of these authors attacked traditional culture and values in order to establish a new system of culture in which Tibetans gain freedom and new ideas. Both authors accepted the ideas of universal evolution believed by western evolutionists. They thought that western culture has always represented the most advanced level of human culture because westerners awakened twice in world history to find the value of humanity rather than a god or divinity (first during the Renaissance, and then in the Age of Enlightenment). It is apparent that 19th century western evolutionists heavily influenced their thoughts. Tibetan scholars accept Lewis Henry Morgan's theory that social evolutionary steps included savagery, barbarism, and civilization. All of these were seen as unilinear, with each society moving from step to step over time, with the end result being an ideal civilized society. Young Tibetans began to dream about an ideal civilized society for Tibet, modeled on western societies.

Many other Tibetan students or scholars seemed to prefer to read western books in Chinese and applied the same ideas, although they did not explicitly express their new findings at that time. The two previously mentioned scholars (Mkhar-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis and Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs) and their works are examples of the growing number of Tibetan scholars who are liberal and, in some cases, radical. There was no strong reaction to those two writers' works, although their writings were published in journals in the 1990s. I was told that A-lags Dor-zhi criticized the main point of Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs's thesis during his thesis defense.

It is worth mentioning a third person, 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje, who also graduated from the Northwestern University for Nationalities two years after the aforementioned writers' (Mkhar-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis and Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs) graduations. He was born in Gcantsa County (Chinese: 尖扎县; pinyin: Jianzha xian), Qinghai, along with Zhogs-dung. Both of them graduated from the Huangnan Teachers Training School⁶² (黄南州民族师范学校 Huangnanzhou minzu shifan xuexiao) in 1982 and taught at a high school in their hometown before they entered Northwest University for Nationalities in 1987. 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje worked at the Tibet Academy of Social Science (西藏社会科学院 Xizang shehui kexueyuan) in Lhasa.

'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje wrote books about western philosophers and their ideas in the Tibetan language. He was regarded as the first Tibetan renegade since many Tibetans assumed that he did things that many Tibetans did not dare to do. In his book, *Muse Upon the Snow Land* (*Sna tsogs gang ri'I khrod kyi bsam gzhi*) (1993) he questioned the authority and omnipotence of Gautama Buddha. As the founder of Buddhism, Tibetans have worshiped Gautama Buddha since the 7th century. Tibetans

⁶² I also earned my high school diploma in 1989 from the Huangnan Teachers Training School and taught Chinese history there for several years after graduation from university in 1994. This school was a Tibetan professional high school where many Tibetan writers and educators studied until it was transformed into a regular high school in 2006.

were reluctant to criticize him before the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and during that time, Tibetans were forced to criticize him. It was said that there were only few voluntary critics of religion during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. A natural tenet of religion is that believers do not criticize or doubt the founder of their religion. In the same way, Tibetans do not criticize Buddha and his teachings, because most of them undoubtedly believe in Buddhism. Whatever the country, governments generally respect the founders of whatever religion(s) is practiced there.

As mentioned before, Tibetans have gained some freedom to practice their religion since 1979. Once that happened, everyone seemed to want to recite mantras and create images of the Buddha in different ways. It is not understood exactly why 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje attacked the Buddha in his book. The author assumed that Tibetans do not think rationally and logically. His hypothesis was that the Buddha did not know how to kill sheep because the Buddha never killed one. Therefore, the writer argues that since he himself knows how to kill sheep, he has skills and knowledge that the Buddha did not have.

Certainly, this argument shocked many Tibetans because they had never experienced a Tibetan condemning the Buddha since the Chinese Cultural Revolution. 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje might think that he is the only Tibetan who fundamentally understood Western philosophy. He was probably also influenced by the idea of the popularized phrase "God is dead" by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Nietzsche puts the statement "God is dead" into the mouth of a "madman" in *The Gay Science*. This is a metaphor of the open sea, which can be both exhilarating and terrifying. It is certainly questioning the values of Christianity. Many Tibetan writers and scholars echoed Nietzsche's ideas in their own works. They did this to attack the power of religion and the clergy in Tibet, and they focused specifically on the Buddhist belief of reincarnation.

Many Tibetans, especially members of the clergy were very upset about 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje's book. Many of them denied his charges and considered him to be crazy. In response to 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje's charges, members of the clergy wrote articles in response that espoused Buddhism as being the best and most advanced philosophy in the world. Many members of the clergy compared Buddhism to science (The Dalai Lama does this, too.), which they consider to be the best way to investigate the truth. Those who responded to 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje's article also argued that a person cannot assume that he or she does not know how to do something if he or she does not actually try to do it. So, in response to his charge that the Buddha did not know how to kill a sheep, the clergy argued that the Buddha *Śākyamuni* had different rebirths before he achieved enlightenment at the age of 35. Therefore, it is likely that the Buddha may have learned to kill animals in one of his former lives.

Many Tibetans see 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje as a good example of a turncoat. They have recently showed a little sympathy to the New Thinkers, but not to 'Brong-bu

Tshe-ring-rdo-rje because they consider his arguments to be meaningless and the New Thinkers, at least, discuss the survival of Tibet.

‘Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje might have been intoxicated with his modern knowledge, and he may have been tempted to lead Tibetans to a new point of view. He took much information from books and tried to see the world from a secular point of view, which is opposite to the religious worldview in Tibet. The goal of ‘Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje’s book was to introduce western philosophy, which he learned by attending the university and by reading Chinese books about western philosophy. He used many new philosophical terms in his book, but most of his invented western philosophical terms in Tibetan are replicas of one of his masters, A-lags Dor-zhi, who often tried to translate new western philosophical terms into the Tibetan language during his classes. One of his former classmates pointed out that:

In his book, he [‘Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje] used exactly the same terms that were originally translated by A-lags Dor-zhi during his lectures. Some of us took note when A-lags Dor-zhi gave lectures. For instance, A-lags Dor-zhi argued that the notion of Sartre’s⁶³ existentialism is equal to *gzhi grub rig pa*, Tibetan Buddhist term. There are many terms likewise in his book borrowed from A-lags Dor-zhi. (Interview, June 2009)

Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje was the first Tibetan who attempted to question the capacities of Buddha, although his hypothesis failed from both the logical and religious perspectives. As a scholar, he lost his reputation among Tibetans. No one discussed him unless they were ridiculing him for at least a year. It is not an exaggeration to claim that his writing was an attempt to encourage young Tibetans to challenge traditional culture, and especially the authority of religious figures or the Buddhist worldview.

Many Tibetan scholars were educated in monasteries, and their faith in religion is unchangeable under “normal” circumstances. A strong religious belief among Tibetans has continued into the 21st century, and Tibetans hope that more religious freedom and less restrictive government policies will bring them a brighter future. A group of modern intellectuals is strongly attached to their jobs, and many of them have written lengthy articles criticizing Tibetan traditions in order to receive rewards from those in power. Uneducated Tibetans worship the Buddha and other deities. Therefore, modern young scholars found conflicts between traditional culture and reality when they examined Tibetan society from a materialist perspective. A-lags Dor-zhi is a good example for those Tibetans who managed to play a dual role in political and religious circles.

⁶³ Jean-Paul Charles Aymard Sartre (French pronunciation: [sɑ̃tʁ], English: /ˈsɑrtʁə/; 21 June 1905-15 April 1980) was a French existentialist philosopher, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, political activist, biographer, literary critic, and atheist. He was one of the leading figures in 20th century French philosophy, existentialism, and Marxism, and his work continues to influence fields such as Marxist philosophy, sociology, critical theory and literary studies. (Retrieved in May 2009 from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Paul_Sartre)

9.2 A Modern Lama

A-lags Dor-zhi has never been a supporter of the New Thinkers. In fact, he was a staunch opponent of them in the 1980s and 1990s. This is interesting because the New Thinkers are heavily influenced by his ideas.

A-lags Dor-zhi studied Buddhist scriptures from the age of 5 and became a member of the Chinese Communist cadre at the age of 16. He was jailed for several years after he was arrested in 1957 in Labrang, where he deepened his knowledge of Buddhism. It is said that he taught himself Chinese and Marxism while serving his sentence. He worked for the Education Department of Dpa'ris County and was appointed vice director of that department there before he taught Tibetan literature at Northwestern University for Nationalities. He became a full professor in 1992. His special role as a Buddhist lama and pro-Marxism professor during the 1980s had a significant impact on many Tibetan students who attended his classes at the university. He also wrote several articles and books on Tibetan culture and language, especially Tibetan grammar. He wrote traditional style poems and was strongly opposed to the free style poetry the younger students used. A-lags Dor-zhi was enthusiastic about Marxist theory and western philosophy. He often shared his discoveries in western literature with his students. Under his influence, Tibetan students became interested in western literature and philosophy. For some students, his influence was profound.

A-lags Dor-zhi often argued in his lessons that Marxism had been the best science or philosophy during the 1980s. He was proud of his knowledge of Marxism and of his assumption that there existed a similarity between Buddhist philosophy and Marxism. He also said in his classes that he was ready to debate any student who might not believe his arguments about the close relation between Buddhism and Marxism. He fundamentally practiced Marxism and tried to convince his students to study Marxism. It is said that young students were curious about the western world, and many of his students were attracted by their professor's ideas, most of which came from the Chinese translation of western books. Many students, including the three aforementioned writers carefully took notes when the professor discussed western philosophy, and it is clear that A-lags Dor-zhi influenced these writers' careers. One of his students, 'Brong-bu Tshering-rdo-rje, wrote a book about western philosophers, closely imitating this professor's ideas after his graduation from university.

A-lags Dor-zhi often asked his students to challenge his perspectives of Buddhism and Marxism. It is evident that his teaching methods affected many of his students because many students read western books at that time. One of his former students observed:

He often brought new knowledge about western philosophy to his students whenever he read new books [in Chinese]. He also often attempted comparing Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and western philosophy when he tried to find the equivalent terms of Tibetan Buddhism that were parallel to western philosophical terminology. Sometimes he argued that there was common

ground between Buddhist teaching and Marxist notions. I also have heard that he wrote articles on the comparison of Buddhist logic and Marxist dialectic. (Interview, July 2009)

A-lags Dor-zhi has recently dedicated his life to teaching Tibetan Buddhism but not Marxism to Chinese audiences, disciples, or clients. The change of attitude demonstrates how Tibetan scholars can adapt to different situations. However, the influence of his early statements cannot be ignored because many of his students became dominant New Thinkers who were guided by materialism and who criticized traditional culture as atheistic.

A-lags Dor-zhi was interested in teaching Buddhism to Chinese audiences, although he never gave up teaching traditional culture to Tibetan students. He eventually stopped promoting Marxism in classes. However, it seems that A-lags Dor-zhi is also a supporter of Tibetan traditional culture and his ideas are sometimes contradictory. This professor is neither a traditional scholar nor a modern one. His ideas are a combination of traditional culture and modern knowledge, which is similar to his role in life as both a lama and a university professor. He opposed many of the New Thinkers' ideas. For example, he attacked a student whose thesis was critical of the theory of Tibetan traditional poetry. Pad-ma-'bum recalled this facet of Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs' graduation thesis defense:

A-lags Dor-zhi was furious about Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs' argument and asked ironic questions such as who told you this thing, your parents, or a Hui Muslim (回族 Huizu 回) [told you]? (Interview, July 2010)

Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs, whose thesis was attacked by A-lags Dor-zhi, never forgot how the professor humiliated him during his thesis defense. Later in his book, Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs satirized some statements made by this professor because he thought that the professor merely desired to protect tradition and the irrational. For example, this professor argued that people had to shift their ways of eating and defecating because people traditionally eat with their mouths and defecate through their anuses.

The New Thinkers were critical of A-lags Dor-zhi for different reasons. However, the obvious problem for them is that A-lags Dor-zhi could not distinguish between "culture" and "nature," but rather he exercised absolute authority as a professor at his university. He never apologized for his misinterpretation, and this shows how Tibetan professors pride for their absolute authority. This also reflected the contradiction of feelings between older Tibetan scholars and the students who prefer to follow the new theories. That said, it is now impossible to completely ignore either school of thought.

The aforementioned background shows that there are many reasons for the emergence of New Thinkers in the last millennium. It did not happen accidentally, but, instead, it arose from historically accumulated phenomena. Education may have a genuine power to change the direction of people's minds and lead them to search for different ways to express their feelings. History has taught us that it is impossible to build a new culture without the base of an old culture. Tibetan New Thinkers have tried hard to

develop a new culture, which is divorced from Tibetan traditional culture. They also seem to make the mistake in judgment that the western world is perfect.

Western philosophy has provided much food for thought for the New Thinkers. Their modern education assisted them in discovering western philosophical insight and inspired them to understand the gap between Tibet and other nations. Marxist ideas converted them into a sort of materialist philosophy, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution provided them with the courage to attack their own traditional culture and norms. The younger generation has started to dislike their own culture, and that has led to the belief that western civilization is superior to Tibetan culture. This is exactly what the Chinese elites did during the May Fourth Movement and again in the 1980s. The New Thinkers believe that the worldview of ordinary Tibetans is problematic and should be replaced by new social norms. Tibetans' minds should be enlightened by new ideas, and Tibetans should walk away from their religious shadow in order to enter the world of science. Nationalism pushes Tibetans to take actions and accept some of the positions of the New Thinkers. To obtain a clear picture of the New Thinkers' philosophy, it is important to examine Zhogs-dung's writings.

CHAPTER 6

DESTRUCTION OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE

1.0 Introduction

This research is neither directed by political bias nor by any ideology of nationalism, but it is highly critical of the New Thinker's argument. This section of the research will not investigate anyone's political positions or discuss the political situation in Tibet.

The New Thinkers' basic philosophy holds that the destruction of Tibet's traditional culture will help to create a new Tibet. They believe that it is more important to save the nation than it is to save the culture. It also appears that, in the New Thinkers' view, Tibet's religion is expendable and needs to be replaced if progress in other areas is to be made. We clearly see some of the viewpoints of the New Thinkers from this kind of statement because their analysis of Tibetan culture is taken from a context in which the Chinese government already dominates and controls the direction of social development. The New Thinkers see Tibetan society from a narrow perspective and have forgotten how strongly the Chinese Cultural Revolution has influenced them.

Nine years after the publication of Mkhar-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis's article, the criticism of traditional culture has been resurrected in Amdo, and this criticism now has a new champion. Bkra-rgyal wrote articles and books under his pen name Zhogs-dung in order to sell western values and Marxism (the New Thinkers deny any influence from Marxism) to Tibetans with the intention of attacking Tibetan traditional culture and religion. Without a doubt, Zhogs-dung became a pioneer among the New Thinkers because he wrote two unusual articles. Some questions that come to mind with considering Zhogs-dung's works include: Why did he write such articles? What inspired him to write these articles?

Tibetans and non-Tibetans alike may have endless questions about Zhogs-dung and his ideas. It is necessary to investigate Zhogs-dung's background and his earlier writings in order to understand why he might be motivated to encourage a destruction of Tibetan traditional culture. In this chapter, I analyze two articles Zhogs-dung wrote in order to discover his earlier thoughts and to show how these articles inspired the New Thinkers. It is also necessary to briefly touch on his fourth book, *Echop* (2008) (*Gnam sa go 'byed*), and his arrest.

2.0 Zhogs-dung or Bkra-rgyal

2.1 *The Birth, Education and Career*

Zhogs-dung or Bkra-rgyal was born in 1963 Tshobzhi Village, Markhuthang town (Chinese: 马克唐镇; pinyin: Maketang zhen), Gcantsa County, Qinghai Province. He went to a Tibetan primary school near his home from 1972 to 1976. The school taught the Tibetan language using Chinese stories that were translated into the Tibetan language, and interspersed with some of Mao's ideas. He entered Huangnan Teachers Training School in 1976⁶⁴ and earned his middle and high school diplomas there. He graduated from high school in 1982 and taught at a high school in his hometown before he entered the Northwestern University for Nationalities in 1986. Bkra-rgyal has worked as an editor at the *Qinghai Nationalities Press* (青海民族出版社 *Qinghai minzu chubanshe*) since his graduation in 1990.

Bkra-rgyal and 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje became classmates from middle school to university, and both of them also worked as middle school teachers. I personally knew them back in 1982 when both of them, with their classmates, came to our school, which is a county level middle school to which our primary level grade 3 was attached, to complete their internships as teachers. 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje taught political science to us and other grades, and I remember that he often read the textbook without paying attention to the students and that he sweated a lot during his classes because he was nervous. Bkra-rgyal did not teach our class, but he taught Tibetan lessons for in one of my older brother's classes. My brother later also became a classmate of both Bkra-rgyal and 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje at the Northwest University for Nationalities.

Bkra-rgyal went to his hometown to teach various subjects after he graduated from the Huangnan Teachers Training School. He also had a chance to study Buddhist logic with a local monk there. As Pad-ma-'bum, his former teacher, at the university recalled:

Both Bkra-rgyal and 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje were proficient in the Tibetan language and they often intended to show their knowledge about Buddhist logic when they first entered the university. I heard that they had chance to learn a little about Buddhist logic prior to their college life. (Interview, July 2010)

Many students in Amdo dreamed of attending the Northwest University for Nationalities in the 1980s and 1990s because it is located in Lanzhou City, which is more developed and because it had Tibetan teachers who appeared to be more open-minded. Modern literature was promoted during the 1980s in the school. I mentioned before that this university only admitted top Tibetan students (Tibetan students mainly from Qinghai and

⁶⁴I earned my high school diploma in 1989 from this school and taught Chinese history there for several years after graduation from a university in 1994. This school was a Tibetan professional high school in which many Tibetan writers and educators studied until it was transformed into a normal high school in 2006.

Gansu provinces) from northwestern China at that time. As Hungchen, a former Tibetan student of the university, pointed out, “At that time, the students who had excellent scores could go to study in Lanzhou. Therefore, students who had chance to study in Lanzhou had opportunities to learn things other Tibetan university students did not have” (Interview, June 2010).

Bkra-rgyal was one of the students selected by this university in 1986, and his education at this university certainly provided him with a new career and shaped his future thoughts and ideas.

As a freshman at the university, Bkra-rgyal studied Tibetan literature. Nobody I interviewed who remembers the time had the impression that Bkra-rgyal had any intention of becoming an original thinker. Many of his former classmates confirmed that they did not notice that he exhibited any particular interest in or passion for attacking traditional culture while he was studying at the university. They thought that he was a traditional person and did not have any special interest in western philosophy. It surprised my respondents later when they found out that as Zhogs-dung, he has been the most aggressive critic of Tibet’s traditional religion and values. In the same way, none of my respondents has any good explanations for just what caused such a significant shift in his thinking. We can guess that the ideas of his teachers, classmates, friends, and books, accumulated in his subconscious and then became conscious. It may be true that the effect of the social environment and educational content produces huge and remarkable shifts in the thinking of people who are either vehemently willing or vehemently unwilling to adapt into the new era. Bkra-rgyal once told me, “I have been critically thinking since I was a very little boy. I often like to suspect everything and to analyze issues” (Interview, September 2009). A New Thinker, Phag-mo-bkra-shis, also confirmed:

One thing is sure that he [Zhogs-dung] has a habit, which is to ponder. Another thing is that he does not only love his nation, but he also has a sense of responsibility for it. He also has writing skills. However, the entire world has tried to follow the same road, which is the universal value. He wrote the articles because he tried to find a future road for Tibet. He thinks that we need to be prepared for a future road without religious influence or control. (Interview, July 2010)

After graduating from college, Bkra-rgyal worked at the *Qinghai Nationalities Press* in Ziling City as an editor until the Chinese authorities detained him on April 23, 2010.

2.2 Detention and Release

Many scholars guess that Zhogs-dung’s fourth book, *Epoch (gnam sa go ‘byed)*, which touched on the protests that occurred in Tibet during the 2008 Olympic Torch Run, was the reason why he was arrested. In this book, he did not offer any analysis of the protests or even an explanation for them. However, he did make some assumptions about the reasoning behind why the protests even began, and he referred to the demonstrations as a revolutionary movement. There are contradictions between his earlier analysis and later

conclusions in the book. For example, he tried to argue that the efforts of New Thinkers or the awakening of Tibetan people was the cause of the movement. Later in his book, he complained that Tibetans are still asleep and that they do not have any ideas about freedom and democracy. His analysis certainly ignores what the protestors really wanted.

The protestors who demonstrated against the carrying of the Olympic Torch through Tibet (and other parts of the world) wanted the Dalai Lama to be able to return to his homeland, and they wanted increased freedom of religion for everyone. Everyone knows why Tibetan monks, farmers, and herders joined the demonstrations. It appears that Zhogs-dung wanted to avoid acknowledging this because he did not want to acknowledge the significant role religion continues to play in Tibetan society. To do so would go against his personal objectives of trying to make Tibetan society more secular. Although he criticized Chinese use of force against Tibetans, he himself has not fought the misinterpretation of the movement. However, he became well known when his book became popular in Amdo. He might be familiar to many western readers because his detention was covered widely in the western media (25th April, 2010, RFA, VOA, BBC).

As Jackson-Han (2010) reports at the Radio Free Asia Web site on 30th April, “He [Bkra-rgyal or Zhogs-dung] published a book this year that was far more critical of the government in the wake of widespread protests against Chinese rule that swept through Tibet in 2008.”

Woeser, a female Tibetan writer who lives in Beijing, said to Voice of America (VOA):

The police left a detention letter to his wife; it is issued by the Xining police bureau. The detention letter says that according to the article 61 of the PRC Criminal Law, he committed a ‘suspected crime of inciting to split the nation.’

Woeser also wrote:

Suspected crime of inciting to split the nation is related to a recently published book, the title of the book is [Epoch] 翻天覆地 (pinyin: Fantian fudi) in Chinese, and in the book, the author recalled the Lhasa incident in 2008 with a different perspective, and it is in conflict with the official version of the incident⁶⁵.

A report in Chinese on the BBC Web site mentions the opinion of Robert Barnett, a scholar at Columbia University in New York City, “This book asserts that, the Tibetan national spirit is at a turning point through the 2008 riots in Lhasa.” It also says, “This book may be one of the reasons for this person’s arrest.”⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Shenghua 申华, Retrieved in April 2010 from:

(<http://www1.voanews.com/chinese/news/china/20100426-A-prominent-Tibet-writer-detained-92091554.html>) (this website is no longer available).

⁶⁶ Retrieved in April 2010 from:

(http://www.bbc.co.uk/zhongwen/simp/china/2010/04/100426_tibet_zhogsdung.shtml)

Others also try to provide different reasons for the arrest. The Jackson-Han (2010) writes at Web site of Radio Free Asia, “[C]hinese police have detained a Tibetan writer who signed an open letter critical of the Chinese government’s quake relief efforts in western Qinghai province, according to his wife.”

Similarly Kalsang Rinchen reported on 26th April 2010:

It appears that Bkra-rgyal’s detention is related to the earthquake in Yushu (Kyebugdo in the traditional Tibetan province of Khams) of April 14 that left thousands dead and many others injured. Just three days after the earthquake, on April 17, a group of prominent Tibetan intellectuals based in Qinghai’s Xining province [in the capital of Qinghai Province, Xining city] had written an open letter of condolence to the victims of the disaster. Zhogs-dung was one of the intellectuals who had signed the open letter, which expresses condolences for the quake survivors and criticized the Chinese government’s handling of the earthquake relief efforts.

Zhogs-dung was released in 2011, and he has since returned to work at the Qinghai Nationalities Press. Many people are curious as to why he was arrested and released. I assume that his fourth book might be the main reason for his arrest, although there may have been other reasons.

2.3 Dual Role

Bkra-rgyal’s role as a New Thinker in Tibet became more prominent because of his arrest, and he has become a symbolic hero for Tibet among young Tibetans. Unlike Bkra-rgyal, his classmate, ‘Dong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje, remains a renegade. It was said that these two men are from the same county, and they spent many years together at the same schools, but they are definitely not friends, and they do not really appreciate each other’s intellectual achievements. Many Tibetans characterize both of them as anti-religion and as nonbelievers because they both used western philosophy and values to judge Tibetan culture and its people negatively. We still do not have a clear answer for why these two scholars are opposed to religious practices and traditional culture. It is fair enough to conclude that Chinese modern education and western books may have changed their minds about several different issues.

Bkra-rgyal recently led the group of New Thinkers, which is now comprised of eight to nine people. This group has published a series of books related to new ideas, and their main goal is to criticize Tibetan traditional culture and promote western values in Tibet. They are not religious missionaries, but they are cultural diffusers, who borrow new elements from other cultures to eliminate traditional values and habits. Bkra-rgyal unconsciously advocates something that the government wants to say, but he is reluctant to criticize local traditions publicly as he did during the Chinese Cultural Revolution because international communities are carefully watching China’s behavior and criticizing some of its policies. Jackson-Han wrote on the Phayul Web site, “Bkra-rgyal,

45, is a leading intellectual who in the past has written books that largely aligned with the Chinese government's views on modernization, religion, and culture in Tibet.”

Many Tibetans may not realize that a broad spectrum of Tibetan political issues is involved in Bkra-rgyal's ideas of secularization. The irony is that many Tibetans were angry with Bkra-rgyal (before his fourth book came out) because they believe that he attacks religion. At the same time, there seems to be an increase in interest in both him and in his work. The feeling of Tibetan nationalism among young students has risen because of his ideas, and he has earned the sympathies of many Tibetans. Many Tibetans assumed that there is a positive side of Zhogs-dung's motivation to criticize Tibetan tradition or culture. Many Tibetan lamas ignore his criticism of religion. The government may agree with his secularization of Tibet, but it does not allow anyone to praise events, which damage the reputation of China.

3.0 Declaration of New Thinkers – Zhogs-dung's Works

Many social norms evolve all the time and are altered or replaced as circumstances warrant. As Gidden (1999) explained, “[W]estern industrial culture was shaped by the Enlightenment – by the writings of thinkers who opposed the influence of religion and dogma, and by who wished to replace them with a more reasoned approach to practical life” (p. 1). Zhogs-dung's view is totally opposite to religious guidelines, and he has tried to copy ideas from earlier Chinese elites in 1919 when Chinese scholars sought democracy, freedom, and science. The ideas of the May Fourth Movement and small portion of the Chinese Cultural Revolution inspired Zhongs-dung to become a real New Thinker. Before discussing Zhogs-dung's main ideas, I will briefly discuss some of his publications.

3.1 The Road Map of Publishing Zhogs-dung's Maiden Work

Naturally the newspapers, radio and television programs are the most important media representations of the May Fourth Movement. Newspapers in Tibet follow the mainstream media of China in their support of this historic event. It is a good time for Tibetan scholars and their students to publish something in the newspapers.

The anniversary of the May Fourth Movement in 1999 was an unusual day for the *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan*. A Tibetan man, Dge-bsnyen-rdo-rje, who received a modern education in Chinese language and taught himself the Tibetan language, became the chief editor of the *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan*. He had been a “new brain” Tibetan who absorbed a lot of information from Chinese books and a brave man who was enthusiastic about starting his new job. Soon after he took his new position, he wanted to show his power and change the atmosphere of the office. He attempted to lead the office in a new direction and challenge the editorial style of the previous chief editors. Dge-bsnyen-rdo-

rje made a conscious effort to bring new Tibetan writers and their views to the attention of the publication's readers. He requested his editors to specifically select articles that had different writing styles or points of view. As one editor from *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* confirms, "In 1999, he [the chief editor] just obtained power to order other editors and managed to throw away the old philosophy of editing articles" (Interview, September 2009).

Therefore, he asked the editor of the literature column⁶⁷ to find interesting articles in commemoration of the May Fourth Movement. He told the editor, "I do not want articles that just praise the May Fourth Movement; that is the old way, and I want a new way to remember the movement. You should try to find new articles, which are unusual" (Interview, September 2009). This man's desire unconsciously provided New Thinkers with the opportunities to publish articles and actually assisted in the evolution of the New Thinkers as a distinct entity.

It may have been by accident that an editor from the *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* visited the office of his former classmate, Bkra-rgyal (Zhogs-dung), who was the editor of the *Qinghai Nationalities Press*. During their conversations, the editor from the newspaper mentioned that his employer was searching for suitable and unusual articles for the 1999 anniversary of the May Fourth Movement. Bkra-rgyal was not shocked by this announcement, but his reaction surprised the editor because Bkra-rgyal immediately submitted an article titled *Roar of Struggle* ('phag 'tshag gi nga ro), saying that he wrote that article one or two years previously, and it perfectly matched the theme of the May Fourth Movement. During an interview, Nyi-gzhon, one of the New Thinkers and a good friend of Zhogs-dung, argued that Zhogs-dung's first article was actually a collective work because Zhogs-dung and his close friends had been discussing similar issues for the last 10 to 15 years. It seems they began to become interested in this topic in the mid 1990s, and Zhogs-dung wrote down their ideas in print form and completed it as an essay at the end of the 1990s. Nyi-gzhon also mentioned that "The thought is our thought, those people who often get together. There were only a few people" (Interview, September 2010).

Nyi-gzhon claimed that he, Zhogs-dung, and Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs often discussed the ideas in Zhogs-dung's published article. However, Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs did not agree that the article was a collective effort, and he even said that he did not read it before its publication. He thinks that many Tibetans feel the same way but that they keep quiet about it for various reasons. Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs stated:

Many Tibetans have been searching for a road for modernizing Tibetan society. His [Zhogs-dung] article demonstrates his perspective on the way to develop Tibetan society. Tibetan society is still controlled by traditional culture. There are many radical changes in the world and in China. He wrote that article in order to find a future road for Tibet. (Interview, July 2010)

⁶⁷ *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* has a literature column, and this column boosted Tibetan literature in the 1970s and nurtured many young writers.

Definitely, Zhogs-dung was a religious believer who was fast becoming an atheist. He was sure that his article perfectly matched the ideas of the Chinese reformists of the 1920s because he absorbed ideas from them. However, Zhogs-dung warned the editor of *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* that his article was rejected by other Tibetan-language publications. I am guessing that Zhogs-dung probably thought that no publication would accept his article because he knew the majority of Tibetan elites are as conservative and closed-minded as many of the Chinese elites were in the 1920s. Zhogs-dung hoped the new chief editor of *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan*, would be more accepting of his ideas. As an editor himself, Zhogs-dung was familiar with the opinions other editors had, and he was not sure they would accept his ideas.

Dge-bsnyen-rdo-rje liked everything about Zhogs-dung's article except the title. The chief editor assumed that the term "struggle" would not be an appropriate term to appear in a newspaper of the Communist Party. Instead, the editor decided on a title that described the struggle to overcome ignorance. As one editor recalled:

I suggested the new title "Acupuncture for Destroying Ignorance" (*Rmongs skran 'joms pa'I gtar kha*)⁶⁸, and he could not understand the Tibetan term *gtar kha* (or acupuncture). He [the chief editor] thought *gtar kha* is a kind of axe or hatchet, but I explained to him that is a method by which one opens a cyst or a sore in order to eliminate a disease. He was excited about the new title and went on to use it. (Interview, September 2009)

Both the original title *Roar of Struggle* and the new title *Acupuncture for Destroying Ignorance: Declaration of Attacking Old Schemas*⁶⁹ symbolically challenged the norms and values of Tibetan traditional culture.

3.2 Zhogs-dung's Maiden Work – "Acupuncture for Destroying Ignorance: Declaration of Attacking Old Schemas"

Bkra-rgyal under his pen name Zhogs-dung published his first article titled "Acupuncture for Destroying Ignorance" (*Rmongs skran 'joms pa'I gtar kha*) with the subtitle "Declaration of Attacking Old Schemas" (*Bag chags*⁷⁰ *rnying rul la rgol ba'I gtam*) in

⁶⁸ The original title of this article is *'Phagt 'tsag gi nga ro* (Roar of Struggle), but the newspaper editor changed it into this title which is used here. It is said that the reason is the newspaper belongs to the Communist Party and it may feel strange to read things like that title.

⁶⁹ George Mandler's definition of schema: The schema that is developed as a result of prior experiences with a particular kind of event is not a carbon copy of that event; schemas are abstract representations of environmental regularities. We comprehend events in terms of the schemas they activate. Schemas are also processing mechanisms; they are active in selecting evidence, in parsing the data provided by our environment, and in providing appropriate general or specific hypotheses. Most, if not all, of the activation processes occur automatically and without awareness on the part of the perceiver-comprehender. (Mandler in McGee and Warms, 2008, p. 362.)

⁷⁰ *Bag chags* is a Tibetan term that means, according to the *New Tibetan Dictionary*, (1) potential energy or nature or instinct, (2) according to Buddhism, potential intelligence and/or wisdom exists as seed. But Zhogs-dung uses this term as thought. Other New Thinkers also confirm they use *bag chags* as thought. I

the special May Fourth Movement column of *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* on May 2, 1999. Zhogs-dung attempted to rethink Tibetan traditional culture as the Chinese elites did in 1919. His article directly targeted Tibetan traditional culture, the core of which is Buddhism. No one could claim whether this article has any connection to 'Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje's book. The tone or rhetorical voice of this article is similar to that of the Chinese New Cultural Movement. For instance, the author attacked Buddhism, which is the core of Tibetan culture, and the Chinese elites criticized Confucianism, which was once the core of Chinese traditional culture. The movement attempted to promote democracy and science in China. To some extent, this article also intended to introduce critical thinking or rational thinking to Tibetans. As a Tibetan editor stated:

I am not sure what exactly he wanted to say. Perhaps he just wanted to promote a new idea. Frankly, his ideas match the ideology of the May Fourth Movement well. He tried to emphasize science and democracy in the same way the May Fourth Movement in China did. (Interview, May 2010)

The main purpose of this article was to find the reason why Tibet became a fragile nation. As one new thinker, Phag-mo-bkra-shis, argued, "[Tibet] is in more and more of a decline, weaker and weaker. [This is] the final point. What is the reason why Tibet declined and got weaker? The answer is the mixture of religion and the mundane" (Interview, October 2010). Tsha-ba Mda'-smyug (2011) noted, "Tibetan Buddhists have been an extra burden for Tibetans, but they have never undertaken responsibilities to improve living conditions for Tibetans" (p. 253). Tsha-ba Mda'-smyug also assumes that Zhogs-dung wants to clean up the theory of Tibetan Buddhism because Buddhism does not support development of the material world, but it truly whittles down material development (p. 230).

Since the 1980s, many Tibetans scholars have tried to analyze Tibetan history in order to find an answer for the decline of Tibet, but they have not been able to figure out a single reason. However, Zhogs-dung (1999) argued that the source of Tibet's decline is its old negative schemas (which are rooted in traditional culture), and the current situation of Tibet is extremely fragile. Therefore, it is important to coerce Tibetans into destroying old norms and constructing new norms in order to have happy and prosperous secular lives (p. 3). Zhogs-dung suggested that Tibetan culture and society should be secularized and that Tibetans should be led by educated people rather than by religious institutions. As Phag-mo-bkra-shis pointed out:

Developing a system of secular culture is related to the way of thinking. [He] talks about the way of thinking; religious way of thinking is mostly opposite to the secular way of thinking. [We] need to remove the cultural *bag chags rnying ba* (old schemas or the old way of thinking)

use a schema for western readers because it might be easier to understand if I use an equivalent term from western academics. Personally, I think the original meaning of *bag chags* is close to schema, and this term also indicates what the New Thinkers really mean by *bag chags*. Zhogs-dung and other New Thinkers asserted that they use *bag chags* as thought. So, for them, old *bag chags* is old thought.

because they are a barrier to developing a system of secular culture. That is his basic idea. (Interview, October 2010)

Bkra-rgyal also believed that there is no engine for evolutionary development unless the new replaces the old. He and the New Thinkers assume that Tibetans have been weaker because they believe in karmic consequence and Buddhist or religious practices. It is obvious that his argument echoes Mkharr-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis' theory, which I discussed in Chapter Five. Both of them imagine that the traditional culture has locked the bodies, mouths, and minds of Tibetans and that it is urgent to liberate them through a revolutionary approach, which will destroy the traditional culture and replace it with a new one.

These authors often talk about ideological revolution and distance themselves from the revolutionary sentiment of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The fact is they have unconsciously taken many ideas from the ideology of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and used them to promote their own ideas. Without a doubt, some western philosophical elements become the supplementary ideological materials of the New Thinkers, and they have tried to use those elements or key words to address Tibetan ideological issues. They often assert that they have been inspired by 18th century Enlightenment thinkers, and they deny the influence from the Chinese Cultural Revolution and Marxism. One new thinker, Phag-mo-bkra-shis noted:

He [Zhogs-dung] mostly read works of European Enlightenment thinkers [in Chinese]. He also got many inspirations from them. But, his ideas are also affected by the Chinese May Fourth Movement. There is a universal similarity. That is the reason why he can apply European philosophy to the Tibetan situation. (Interview, October 2010)

Another new thinker, Gcod-pa-klu-rgyal, also said:

What is a universal road or universal value? A society has science, love, democracy, freedom, and equality. This direction is the goal of his article. If we ignore these things, individuals in our society will not have a happy life. This direction or road is our goal, but he did not clearly point out these things in his first article. Anyway, he vaguely understood this road or direction at that time. His last book clearly presents these things or his idea of the new direction. (Interview, October 2010)

Zhogs-dung (1999) wrote, "Our principle is to distinguish secular culture and religious culture, and we should practice and utilize these two cultures respectively" (p. 4). This statement later become the core value of the New Thinkers, and this principle drives them to create more articles and books that articulate their thoughts.

Phag-mo-bkra-shis elaborated on the point by the author and New Thinkers in the following description:

Then his view should connect to history, how the process of history created the current situation. If we look back in history, it needs to confirm what succeeded and what failed. He spent a long time thinking about it, and the result of his observation is that everyone who lives on the earth must survive. One wants to have an equal or better life compared to others. [...] For that reason,

[we] should think about secular culture and secular work. At first, our one thousand year history is a jumble of religion and worldly or mundane [sacred and profane]. So, it is necessary to develop a secular culture if [we] want to rule or manage in a secular world. A secular cultural system should be developed and it should be split from the way of thinking and of life of the mixture of religion and the mundane. However, everything is the mixture of religion and the mundane [in Tibet]. It is dangerous if [we] do not start to develop a secular cultural system. In history, there was no secular cultural system, and we reached our current situation. So, what is the situation of present Tibet? (Interview, October 2010)

It is not difficult to understand the New Thinkers' views if we examine their ideas within the broader context of the global community. The New Thinkers just want to be globalized or modernized, which means they accept western values, which are dominated by American values (Tibetans and Chinese often think the United States has the best culture and values). Their ultimate goal is to convince Tibetans to accept globalization. They avoid discussing sinicization, but they believe that globalization may bring hope to Tibet. To some extent, sinicization is part of globalization, and it threatens all small or weak nations or ethnic groups in the world. The leaders of globalization are American international corporations, which promote worldwide business and take every advantage they can in order to become richer. Living in a business world or market place, when one person gets something, it means another person loses something. This is the nature of globalization, and the Tibetan New Thinkers want to play the game without understanding the risks. As Arjun (2008) claimed, "[O]ne man's imagined community is another man's political prison" (p. 587). The New Thinkers believe the Tibetan people are prisoners of religion, and it is necessary to pull down the thick wall of old tradition.

3.3 The Second Article--"Tossing and Expelling the Old Schemas"

The main idea of Zhogs-dung's second article is stated plainly, "[We] do not need to search for our enemy elsewhere; our enemy is our own old schemas. For totally destroying our old schemas from root to branch, the gun or arrow should point to our own hearts [minds]" (p. 2). Zhogs-dung's second article, *Tossing and Expelling the Old Schemas* (*bag chags sprug bton*), appeared in *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* on July 30, 1999, and it lists four categories of old schemas: the primitive spiritual beings schema, the primitive knowing schema, the great Buddhist schema, and custom and habit schema. These four categories correspond to the four old things (old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas) of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. As Gracie (2012) reported:

Mao's Cultural Revolution set out to destroy the Four Olds – Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas. In 1966, 11 million Red Guards, Mao's young shock troops, flooded Beijing and destroyed thousands of relics and temples – all of China's history that they could find.

Zhogs-dung referred to the Four Old Things by different names, explained some of the characteristics of each, and diagnosed the symptoms of these problematic Tibetan

practices. Though Zhogs-dung diagnosed the problematic symptoms in detail in his article, the only solution he proposed is eliminating the traditional practices and ideas.

Zhogs-dung provided many naive and baseless examples of each schema in order to legitimize his accusations, and I only will reintroduce a few important examples from his article so that we can understand what his main points are. Zhogs-dung argued that Tibetans commonly believe in spirits such as mountain-gods, deities, and ghosts, and they seek help from these spiritual beings rather than rely on their human abilities. For Zhogs-dung, this is one symptom of the negative influence of the primitive spiritual beings schema in Tibet.

Tibetans often use divination such as *mo ba*⁷¹ and *rtsis pa*⁷² to guide their lives. This is a symptom of the primitive knowing schema. The symptoms of great Buddhist schema are countless because it is the core of Tibetan culture. Zhogs-dung criticized the Buddhist notion of “no self” and karma. He proposes that the notion of “no self” led Tibetans to be unpractical human beings in a profitable material world, and the karmic view destroyed the energies of Tibetans in a competitive world. Similarly, he mentioned that the custom and habit schema controlled the minds of Tibetans, and they do and think of things in the old way. Parents arrange marriages for their offspring, and people do not care about laws and regulations (Zhogs-dung, 1999, p. 2).

Zhogs-dung assumed that traditional culture is full of negative things, and those negative things must be eliminated by a cultural revolution, which would be led by those enlightened Tibetan intellectuals like himself and other New Thinkers. He has not understood the nature of cultural development, and he advocated for the destruction of Tibetan culture without a careful plan. This is why many Tibetans asked him, “If the old culture disappears, then what would be the new one?” Zhogs-dung’s later works tried to respond to this question, and I will discuss them in detail in Chapter Seven.

Zhogs-dung’s ideas produced many enemies. His arguments were like a bomb that shook Tibetan society. He is critical of Tibetan traditional culture because he believes that Tibetan traditional culture lacks science and new ideas. He believes that Tibetan traditional culture, including the four old schemas is the key obstacle to developing Tibetan society, the reason why the society is still backward, and the reason why Tibetans lack confidence.

Zhogs-dung is not the only one who was critical of Tibetan traditional culture. Many Tibetans have felt they have been behind the rest of the world for some time. This sentiment exists strongly among Tibetan students. They began to investigate the reason why they were behind. They concluded that the religion of Tibet has been the root of the backwardness and has been a barrier to other forms of development. They argued that Tibet was a strong nation before Buddhism arrived there. They believed that religion is the main reason Tibet became a powerless nation. A Tibetan scholar, who lives in the

⁷¹ *Mo ba* is a kind of fortuneteller.

⁷² *Rtsis pa* is an astrologist.

United States, reflected on his own experience, “A long time ago, I also thought that religion was main reason for Tibet’s backwardness, but I now believe there were many reasons, including the ecosystem” (Interview, July 2010).

We cannot find concrete scientific reasons in Zhogs-dung’s arguments, but only lists of four old schemas. As Sherab Dhargye (2003) wrote:

Although in fact it is hard to know what Mr. Zhogs-dung tries to say and not say, I felt it is necessary to offer a short explanation from another point of view because his book⁷³ does not contain any reasonable meaning when examining the aim and orientation of this book. (p. 2)

Zhogs-dung’s arguments cannot ignore the shadow of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. A Tibetan scholar, Rdo-rje, analyzed why the Chinese Cultural Revolution has had a large impact on Zhogs-dung and other New Thinkers:

Their idea is a continuity of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, because most of the Tibetan New Thinkers were born in between 1962 and 1964, and they began their modern education between 1972 and 1974. This period was just four or more years after the Chinese Cultural Revolution was launched in China. Therefore, the minds of the New Thinkers are full of the thick ideology of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The so-called the ideology of the Chinese Cultural Revolution was a political direction, which indicated that new things would not come if the old things were not destroyed. This Cultural Revolution was a great proletarian movement, and it was a kind of class struggle revolution. The bourgeoisie was the opponent or enemy of the movement. The friends of the revolution were all proletarians. A basic principle of the revolution was that one could be either an enemy or friend, but there was no other option. For instance, the revolutionaries asked questions such as: Where do the true or correct thoughts come from? Do they drop from sky? Do they grow on the earth? The revolutionaries asked these kinds of questions. Their answers to these questions was no. But, the correct ideas were in men’s minds, and they believed a revolution could be built around class struggle. (Interview, October 2009)

The Chinese term *ge ming* 革命 is the translation of English term revolution, but it literally means to cut one’s life, or kill, in Chinese. For instance, the Chinese phrase *ge ni de ming* 革你的命 means to kill someone. Tibetans used *gsar brje* for revolution, *gsar* refers to new and *brje* refers to change or transform. The combination of these two words means revolution in Tibetan. This word construction leads us to believe that revolution means to throw away old things and to build new things. The New Thinkers have a similar ideology, but they chose a different approach. As Zhogs-dung (1999) argued:

The time wheel of all human being has reached the “knowledge economy” stage, and why do we [Tibetans] still live poorly without searching the root of our decline or disease today. [...] For mind and intelligence to get pure freedom and for the overall development of [Tibet], we must kill and destroy old schemas though they are powerful, like our parents. (July 30th, 1999, p. 2)

⁷³ The same article was reprinted in Zhogs-dung’s first book, and Sherab Dhargye mainly talks about this article.

A good example is that they try to break the old earthen pottery in order to make new pots with new materials such as plastic and iron. They hope that the new product will replace the old one. This Tibetan metaphor of the iron pot replacing the earthen pottery implies that they attempt to change the core of Tibetan culture. However, the basic foundation of the New Thinkers is in accord with that of the Chinese Cultural Revolution because both assumed nothing new could be created unless the old was destroyed. Therefore, to some extent, so-called new thought is just a continuity of the spirit of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. New Thinkers reject this notion as one of them argued:

Deconstruction of culture and [or] the four old things during the Chinese Cultural Revolution is different from [what] Mr. Zhogs-dung says about Tibetan culture. Their positions differ. The Chinese Cultural Revolution was derived from the political point. [It] attempted to change the soul. [...] So, the standpoints are totally different. Mr. Zhogs-dung talks about his cultural revolution and his standpoint is culture. [He] talks about aspects of culture. So, I definitely disagree if [one] says there is an influence of the Chinese Cultural Revolution [on Zhogs-dung]. If [we] examine the process of his thought, in general, how do we say there are influences from other nations, other thoughts and cultures, other cultural reforms, and thoughts of social reforms? Now, it is hard to say that, for example, Marxism, or the Chinese Cultural Revolution is the most influential. (Gcod-pa-klu-rgyal, Interview, October 2010)

Pad-ma-'bum, a Tibetan scholar who lives in a western country and focuses on Tibetan contemporary literature, observed:

All is wrong and should be thrown away. It is similar to the view of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. I think the method is different because Chairman Mao's method is to destroy religion by putting monks in jail. The Chinese Cultural evolution was a movement. So, something is similar but there is a differentiation. (Interview, July 2010)

Zhogs-dung's theory shows that a fundamental condition for development is to destroy old traditions and practices, including the traditional way of thinking and worldview. His investigation led him into an extreme corner, and his double-edged sword needed to cut the root of Tibetan culture. Zhogs-dung and the other New Thinkers rushed to build a modern culture through revolution, and their ideas were heavily influenced by sinicized western ideas and by the actions of Chinese movements such as the New Cultural Movement in the 1920s and the Chinese Cultural Revolutions in the 1960s and 1970s.

In this article, Zhogs-dung discusses the destruction of Tibetan culture because he perceives the traditional culture to be a negative. As Gcod-pa-klu-rgyal pointed out, "Zhongs-dung's earlier works discuss the destruction of [Tibetan] culture and later proposes a new cultural revolution for Tibet" (Interview, October 2010). This argument perfectly meets the core of the Chinese New Cultural Movement (1915-1923), in which China lost her traditional values and is now struggling to rebuild the lost culture. Morality became more important while the economic development brought wealth to many people. This is why many Han Chinese assume that they do not have a real Chinese culture because Chinese people not only experienced the Chinese Cultural Revolution but also the Chinese New Cultural Movement. These two movements badly damaged the body

and soul of Chinese traditional culture. Tibetan culture was also heavily destroyed by the Chinese Cultural Revolution and is now slowly recovering from the wound.

As a Tibetan critical of his argument said, “If we destroy the root of our culture, how can our culture be a Tibetan culture? It is very dangerous that one even wants to kill his parents for nothing” (Tshe-ring-don-grub, interview, August 2010). What are the New Thinkers trying to do? As a common Chinese phrase points out, “add oil to the flame or fire during a blaze.” Therefore, Zhogs-dung’s desire to lead a new Tibetan cultural movement is a systematic massacre of parents and their tradition. Zhogs-dung dreams that Tibetans can learn from the experiences of former Chinese movements and repeat the behaviors of those Chinese activists. But many Tibetans assert that his articles just contain meaningless slogans, and there is too much confusion. Pad-ma-‘bum complained:

One copy of that article [Zhogs-dung’s second article] was sent to me after there was a strong debate among Tibetans in Mtshosngon [Qinghai]. The person who sent it to me also informed me that the article made a big show. Honestly, I read the article but I did not understand it. I asked the person who sent me the article, and she told me that Tibetans were discontented because the article criticized “old” [or old tradition](*rmying ba*). (Interview, July 2010)

He continued, “Many Tibetan [readers] in the United States said people do not need to be angry about that article because no one can understand it (Interview, July 2010). A few students agree with Zhogs-dung’s main point about the old schemas, (*bag chags rmying ba*), and that these old *bag chags* are created by the divine, astronomy, karmic view, and so on. As Pad-ma-‘bum pointed out:

If he would have chosen an unambiguous topic and presented a precise argument with good examples, he could have hit the goal and would have not made many people mad. Unfortunately, his topic is massive and it smacks all sorts of people. (Interview, July 2010)

As mentioned before, Zhogs-dung’s article supported what Chinese people generally believe about Tibet being a backward society. This article left much confusion among Tibetans, even though a large number of people read it and discussed it. One editor of *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* observed:

Tibetans do not often read *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* or other newspapers in Tibetan, but, surprisingly, this time many people read this article. I think the author and his friends spread the news, the publication of his articles, among Tibetan readers. (Interview, September 2009)

The New Thinkers’ promotion of the article may have increased readership of the article, but it is also possible that Tibetans were interested in reading this article because of the sensitive topic and their interest in discussing it.

Tibetan journalists from a radio broadcast station in Ziling tended to support Zhogs-dung’s view, and they encouraged Tibetans to read this article during their broadcasts. Most of the staff members at the station had received a modern education, and they may

have had sympathy for Zhogs-dung's point of view. Zhogs-dung's ideas may have touched their unconscious minds and awakened them to ideas they had at the time.

A radio journalist interviewed many Tibetan scholars, including monks, about their views on this article. Many of those interviewed agreed that Zhogs-dung's article corresponded to the views of the Chinese government. However, it must be remembered that the radio programs are also part of the government propaganda machine and that neither the interviewers nor their subjects have the freedom to discuss everything they want to. The content of the conversation must be carefully chosen, and it has to support the government position. The broadcasters' job is to promote the Chinese government's interest for their audiences. The Chinese Cultural Revolution taught Tibetans a good lesson on how to deal with political or sensitive issues. We can see this kind of learning from an answer a journalist got from one of his interviewees, a Tibetan monk, 'Jigs-med-thegs-mchog:

Nowadays, we Tibetans need to learn new things, so, it is ok if someone has a new thought, but I am a religious figure and cannot join his team. But, new ideas are necessary for Tibet. It is great to have such an article. We should have many kinds of ideas. (Hungchen recalled, May 2010)

'Jigs-med-thegs-mchog's response openly supports Zhogs-dung's arguments, but the monk notes that he must also respect his monastic traditions. Whether the interviewees wanted to or not, they had to respect the influence of materialism.

It is important to note the significance of a discussion of Zhogs-dung's article on a radio program. Tibet has a very high illiteracy rate. So, the radio program brought a discussion of the article to Tibetans who would not have been able to read it. Zhogs-dung's name has high recognition in Tibet even among the illiterate population. However, it is also true that if the clergy was critical of Zhogs-dung's article, chances are that the clergy would share their critical views with the lay people in the same way the government did during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Although ordinary Tibetans were not able to join the academic debate about Zhogs-dung's articles, they often asked their educated friends and monks why Zhogs-dung hates religion and why he wants to destroy their beliefs.

Zhogs-dung's articles stirred the Tibetan communities of Amdo in different ways. Some Tibetans have been loyal to Zhogs-dung, and other scholars strongly rejected his claims. Monks condemned the author, and they labeled him a revolutionary and deviant (Tibetan: *lta log pa*).

Some high-ranking lamas (I think they have not read Zhogs-dung's work.) think that Zhogs-dung is just a renegade (Tibetan: *lta log pa*) and that he does not know anything about Tibetan Buddhism. As A-lags 'Jam-dbyangs, noted:

Zhogs-dung and his heretic group are ignorant. I think they did not practice religion, and they know nothing about religion. Their attack on religion is a big mistake, and they do not have capabilities to criticize Buddhism. They are just like a big round rock rolling down a high

mountain, so it is useless to push it up. It would be better to leave them alone. It is a pity they have nowhere to go after they die. Someone told me that they are concerned about the destiny or future of Tibet. I appreciate their concerns, but they chose the wrong way to help Tibetans. (Interview, September 2010)

Some members of the clergy who gave up their vows support the New Thinkers in their criticism of the privileges some of the high-ranking monks and lamas enjoy. An ex-monk, Dkon-mchog, argues, “It is good that Zhogs-dung said something that others are afraid to say. Religious figures should know their problems” (Interview, September 2010).

Tibetans in Amdo are divided into two groups: pro-traditional culture and pro-new ideas. The editor of *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* received many complaints from both sides requesting that he publish more articles from both sides. There are many rumors about Zhogs-dung and one of them says that some even sent threatening letters to Zhogs-dung to demand that he stop attacking religion.

It is said that representatives from the various positions were invited to write articles about Tibetan culture in a special column in *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan*. In 2010, I spent several days in the Qinghai Provincial Library browsing every issue of *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* from 1999 to 2000 carefully. I could not find a single article that opposed Zhogs-dung’s position, but I found several articles written by New Thinkers or their supporters. It is expected that the Communist Party would not accept the view of monks who have a different worldview than that of the government. I was told that there were a few articles about preserving traditional culture, but I found nothing. These articles, especially Zhogs-dung’s articles in the newspaper became the foundation for the New Thinkers’ ideology. However, we can get a rough picture of the opposing positions through a symposium, which invited Tibetan scholars to share their views in order to clear up the turmoil of the debate. At the symposium, some people supported the two articles, and others criticized them. Other Tibetan scholars did not take part in either group and they just kept silent during the symposium. The editor of *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* organized several symposia to discuss Zhogs-dung’s articles and other ideas of the New Thinkers.

4.0 Dialogues Between New Thinkers and a Few Other Tibetan Scholars

Generally, people are not ready to accept new ideas or thoughts if their culture is in danger of extinction and they believe that they have the best tradition. Tibetans converted to Buddhism more than 1,000 years ago, and they are the only ethnic group in the world, which has preserved Buddhism in their unique way. Tibetans want to continue their unique culture, but young, Chinese-educated people dislike the old traditions. Without a doubt, Tibetans all hope to make Tibet a powerful nation. The conflict between tradition and modernity is an old topic for many nations, and there is no successful model to duplicate in Tibet. Tibetans discuss this topic among themselves in their own way without reaching any conclusions.

The chief editor felt that it was necessary to clarify the position of the publication and to release tension between the supporters and opponents of Zhogs-dung's views. The newspaper office organized at least two symposia in Ziling at the end of 1999 so that people representing both sides of the discussion could share their views. The goal of these symposia was to quiet the debate by giving everyone an opportunity to express their ideas in person.

4.1 The First Symposium

I attended the first symposium on November 11th 1999, and there was a heated discussion between the supporters and the opponents of Zhogs-dung's ideas. About 20 Tibetan scholars participated in the evening symposium, and most of them were friends of Zhogs-dung or New Thinkers who favored modern values. Two men, a university mathematics professor and a local businessman, from Ziling and an educator from the Golok (Mgolog) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture were fiercely opposed to Zhogs-dung's arguments. Not one monk was invited to the symposium, and this indicated the nature of the symposium. This symposium was for lay people or intellectuals to debate about Tibetan culture. A few participants, including myself, did not take part in any group but just listened to the debate.

After an editor from the newspaper introduced the objective of the discussion, he asked Zhogs-dung to present his main arguments briefly to the audience. Zhogs-dung thanked the chief editor, Dge-bsnyen-rdo-rje, for editing and publishing his articles in the newspaper. He reiterated that the core argument of the two articles was that Tibetans should wake up from their old tradition and find a new culture so that they could have a brighter future. Zhogs-dung believed that Tibetans had been living in the dark because their traditional culture and Buddhism dominates their lives and thoughts. He also suggested that Tibetans should split from those old cultural influences or schemas and embrace science, with modernization and material development. He assumed that Tibetans have not had liberal minds and new ideas because of the religion and old schemas, which are not rational, but were, instead, based on superstition. Zhogs-dung said the reality of material development is forcing Tibetans to choose new schemas in order to survive. The old road of religion would prohibit Tibetans from modernizing, thus meaning that they would always be behind other nations. Therefore, the right thing for Tibetans to do is to destroy old schemas and build a new culture for material development, which will allow them to compete with other nations. It was clear that Zhogs-dung believes that Tibetans have to choose one or the other. His speech seemed to correspond to the Marxist lessons of his high school and university.

Zhogs-dung's views echo China's core policy, which supports economic development and political hegemony. His ideas were very close to the Chinese views that support modernization and oppose religion. He and other New Thinkers accept the

Chinese image of Tibetan culture and their criticism of this culture. They do not state that religion is an opiate of the masses, but they conclude that the old schemas are the enemies of Tibet. They argue that Tibet's traditional culture has given rise to irrational, erratic, and heaven-oriented personalities. Zhogs-dung stuck to the main arguments of those two articles during the meeting. He assumed that his idea was similar to a "self operation" in order to cut cancer out of one's body. Therefore, Zhogs-dung understood the pain but felt it was necessary to be self-critical because Tibet was facing its most serious challenge to its survival (Zhogs-dung, 2008, pp. 42-45).⁷⁴ The tone of his speech was gentle and soft compared to a class struggle meeting or a political study session during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, but his rhetoric delivered similar ideas presented at class struggle meetings. One such idea is that modern, educated Tibetans should be the designers and leaders of the future Tibet.

Religion became the main target of Zhogs-dung's presentation. From the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and even before this time, religion has become the first and most important target of the Chinese cadre in Tibet. As Arjia Rinpoche⁷⁵ stated, "The original intent of the Chinese clampdown on monasteries was not necessarily to destroy them, but to reduce the power of religion as part of an attempt to gain absolute control over Tibet" (p. 125).

Zhogs-dung's revolutionary-style argument, whether in his articles or in his speech, did not give readers or the audience very concrete or specific example. Zhogs-dung discussed things in general and used many slogans. This seemed to create more confusion rather than inspire people to take action. A Tibetan who participated in the meeting in 1999 later concluded:

Tibetan traditional culture cannot be separated from religion. If one attacks religion, then one has to attack traditional culture. It is wrong to have this tradition and one should build a new one, of course they [Tibetan New Thinkers] need to attack religion. (Interview, May 2010)

The opposition scholars totally disagreed with Zhogs-dung's ideas and made their own argument. Sangs-rgyas-rgyal, a mathematics professor from Qinghai Normal University, and, ironically, a member of the Chinese Communist Party, was the key person who tried to protect the value of traditional Tibetan culture. He himself was educated in mathematics in Chinese, and he taught himself Tibetan. He studied Tibetan Buddhism with a famous Buddhist lama, A-lags Shar-gdong, and he became the translator for this lama when the lama delivered religious teachings to his Han Chinese followers. Sangs-rgyas-rgyal believed that Tibetans could not give up their traditional culture and religion because those were what Tibetans possess and these treasures could be shared with others.

⁷⁴ His lecture notes at the first and second meeting were published in his first book: *The Call of Eloquence* (*Dpyod shes rgyang 'bod*)

⁷⁵ In Tibetan language, Rin po che is a term to address or refer respectfully to a reincarnation (*sprul sku* or Tulku) or lama. Many people from Amdo use *A-lags* instead of Rinpoche.

He and his cousin-in-law, Bsam-grub-tshe-ring, a businessman (he was recognized as a reincarnation in 2012), concluded that it is wrong to criticize Buddhism and that the Buddhist philosophy is the reliable truth. The traditional culture and Buddhism have nurtured Tibetans, and Tibetans cannot survive in the world without their religion. Tibetan Buddhism has been the treasure of Tibet, and nothing could replace it.

A man from Golok was shocked by Zhogs-dung's argument because he assumed Zhogs-dung wanted another cultural revolution. He warned the New Thinkers that the Chinese Cultural Revolution attempted to destroy the traditional culture, but the result was a great disaster. No one in Tibet wants to see another Chinese Cultural Revolution. It would be dangerous to have this kind of development.

The opposition speakers' arguments were also very general and repetitive. They emphasized the function and role of Buddhism in Tibetan society. Tibetans are very proud of their religion; they maintain that it makes Tibetan culture unique, even though Buddhism itself was imported from India centuries ago. The element of Buddhism can be found in the veins of Tibetans and at the very center of Tibetan culture. It seems that Tibetan culture may stop breathing without Buddhism, and Tibetans feel happy with this spiritual direction. Many Tibetans equate the New Thinkers with a type of virus that has been contracted through external contact and internal ignorance. They also maintain that the virus is contagious and is spreading.

During the discussion a New Thinker and performer⁷⁶, Sman-lba-skyabs, disproved the positive side of Tibet's religion, and he borrowed the ideas of a Chinese writer to show the dark side of the Tibetan lifestyle caused by their religion. The speaker proclaimed that a Chinese writer inspired him to see the backward life style of Tibetans more clearly.

Tibetans often deal with three different levels of the world. One could analyze this structure of Tibetan life through the housing structure of a family. In some places in Tibet, local people live in three-story buildings, and the top floor of the buildings are usually occupied by religious objects, including statues of the Buddha, images of religious figures, and an altar. The second floor is the space where family members live, and the first floors or bottom floors accommodate livestock or domestic animals. This family housing structure illustrates the map of Tibetans' minds, though many Tibetans do not own three floor buildings in many regions. The majority of Tibetan men and women have this kind of fixed mental pattern, in which they prioritize religion over everything else. They often think that they should provide the most treasured things to those who live in the third floor with nothing left for people. The products of their hard work are often offered to religious groups or end up in temples. The ordinary people's living conditions are a little bit better than their livestock, which live in much darker places.

⁷⁶ He is a performer of comic dialogue and his performances often discriminate against local people because he thinks that Tibetan peasants and herders are uneducated.

Therefore, many young people believe it is necessary to criticize religious power and destroy the construction of the mental pattern of three story buildings among Tibetans.

Tibetan intellectuals are responsible for leading a new generation to revolting against the old structure of Tibetan mind or traditional culture. Sman-lba-skyabs, an artist by profession, was very emotional and animated when he delivered his speech during the symposium. His argument echoed revolutionary slogans from the Chinese Cultural Revolution, too. The Chinese Cultural Revolution categorized the religious group as exploiters and described religion as the opiate of the masses. He also claimed that Tibetans were under pressure from three entities, money, monks, and *tulkus*. The Chinese revolutionary ideology identified three sources of oppression: feudal landlords, international imperialism, and religion, and claimed that each of these entities exploited the lay population. Sman-lba-skyabs agreed that these entities exploit the lay Tibetans primarily because of the way the Tibetans look at the world. Therefore, Sman-lba-skyabs felt it was necessary to destroy this old system in order to rescue Tibetans from their own thinking. Sman-lba-skyabs wanted to be one of the leading New Thinkers, but he has not yet written a book. Because of this, people often ignore him as a New Thinker. Many Tibetans criticized him in 2008 when he held a large wedding party at the same time many people were mourning the victims of the 2008 uprising. Recently he has been working as a part time assistant to missionaries who are translating materials into the Tibetan language.

Many other supporters of New Thinkers also made short speeches repeating similar revolutionary ideas. Most of them supported Zhogs-dung's article and the ideas it represented. Another common point was that they consistently argue that Tibetan traditional culture or religion has blocked the road of social development in Tibet. The religious philosophy tightly controls Tibetans' minds and prevents free thinking and reaction to reality. Because of religious expansion in daily life, Tibetans have had miserable lives and were backward. Therefore, destruction of Tibetan culture is necessary and urgent.

One important New Thinker, Nyi-gzhon, came to the symposium and he did not say a word during the debate though people assumed he was a radical attacker of traditional culture. After the symposium, one of his friends teased him, "He is a smart man. He did not take any part in the symposium because there were many people there. Some New Thinkers pretend not to be active in public" (Interview, May 2010).

The battle concerning tradition and modernity has not always been between the traditional scholars and New Thinkers. A group of pragmatists wants to preserve Tibetan culture while creating a modern Tibetan nation. This group is mixing modern theories and Tibetan traditional thinking to advance the Tibetan cause. This group is currently inactive. They have carefully observed the debate between the traditionalists (mostly monks) and the New Thinkers. These moderate scholars are afraid to offend the ideology of the government, but they want to maintain what Tibet has in terms of its culture and

religion. Indeed, some of the moderate participants only had neutral things to say, and they speak in support of maintaining a balance between the two most extreme groups. It is obvious that they did not want to criticize Tibetan Buddhism as the core of Tibetan culture, and they did not support Tibetan nationalism as a sensitive political matter. The moderate group themselves pretended not to believe in religion in public. They sometimes outwardly show their loyalty to the Communist Party by being disrespectful of people's personal beliefs. In support of the New Thinkers, they said that there were some benefits to materialism and modernization. They pay lip service but lack action. Tibetans call them *ngo gnyis ma*, which means "two faces" literally, but means "double-dealer" in this context.

No agreement was achieved during the first symposium, but it ended with terrible quarrels. The symposium ended when the mathematics professor and his cousin-in-law furiously left the meeting.

According to Zhogs-dung's draft of a speech in his first book, there was another symposium in Ziling, but I could not find details about this meeting. An editor of the newspaper, *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan*, also confirmed that he arranged at least two symposia in Ziling regarding Zhong-dung's articles. However, the symposia did not end the debate among Tibetan scholars, and Zhogs-dung's ideas received more supporters. The newspaper became the breeding ground of the New Thinkers' expanding influence. I asked Phag-mo-bkra-shis where the gap existed between the New Thinkers and other Tibetan scholars during the two symposia. He explained:

I think they [other Tibetan scholars] did not clearly differentiate the faith of believers and the Buddhist logic, etc. They unconsciously mixed those two things because of their own faith, in Bkra-rgyal's words 'because of attachment.' Now I think they were not able to differentiate between the two. It is possible to question it in terms of Buddhist logic. But as a faith, it is your own faith or belief, it is not right that you discriminate against my belief and the object of my belief. At that time, they did not know that. They were not able to differentiate those things, for this reason; there was a lot of attack and debate. They were unable to differentiate those things, and they could not have the right answer. (Interview, July 2010)

The New Thinkers did not acknowledge that they attacked Tibetans' faith though they still claim that religious faith has brought down Tibetans in a modern world.

5.0 Articles Supporting the View of the May Fourth Movement and Zhogs-dung

The writings of New Thinkers dominated a special column of *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan*, and these articles played an important role in diffusing the ideas of the New Thinkers. An article titled, "The Declaration of 21st Century Youth: A Word Inspired By/Originated from the May Fourth Movement" (*Dus rabsrabs nyer gcig pa'I lang tsho'I bsgrags gtam:lnga bzhi las byung ba'I gtam*), appeared in the special column for the May Fourth Movement of *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* on May 8, 1999. The author, Bdud-lha-rgyal,

explained that since the 1980s, Tibetan scholars have used literature as a method for expressing a different voice and directing for Tibetan youth to seek “the goal of economy or material life or function of desire” in order to eliminate suffering from both the hearts and bodies of Tibetans. Bdud-lha-rgyal, a lecturer of modern literature, believed that literature often plays an important role whenever people reach a turning point in history. His two examples are the European Renaissance and the Chinese May Fourth Movement. These two movements criticized traditional ideology and discovered new ideologies. Bdud-lha-rgyal also argued that literature is the only force of superstructure⁷⁷, though it seems to be an anomaly. However, literature is the only sword, which can be used and owned by Tibetan youth (p.2). It is obvious that his article not only praises the May Fourth Movement but also truly accepts the core idea of this movement and of Marxism.

Bdud-lha-rgyal accepted the economic determinism of Marxism but assumes literature is the one important part of the superstructure, which relies on the foundation of economy. As a member of the New Thinkers, a former college classmate of Zhogs-dung, and a faculty member of the Northwest University for Nationalities, Bdud-lha-rgyal proposed that Tibetans should take advantage of the opportunities the Chinese reform policies provided to focus on the material life rather than on the spiritual life. He does not directly attack the traditional culture, but he implicitly suggests that Tibetans should happily consume material production rather than pursue spiritual comfort. It is not an exaggeration to say that this article adds to Zhogs-dung’s argument by supporting the secularization of Tibetan culture, but his approach focuses on literature, while Zhogs-dung focuses on the problems of traditional culture. Both of them agree that radical change is needed in order to ensure Tibet’s future. However, it is said that Bdud-lha-rgyal has a significant following among the students whose views align with those of the New Thinkers. He is a high profile professor who has worked hard to bring new knowledge to Tibetan students, and his lectures at the university have influenced the minds of many Tibetan youths in Lanzhou. Other conservative young students from different Tibetan colleges call his young followers as *Bdud-lha-rgyal gyi bdud phrug* or the evil babies of Bdud-lha-rgyal because the term Bdud in his name literary means demon or evil. But one of his students, ‘Dren-byed (2008), noted:

⁷⁷ In Marxist theory, human society consists of two parts: the base and superstructure; the base comprehends the forces and relations of production — employer-employee work conditions, the technical division of labour, and property relations — into which people enter to produce the necessities and amenities of life. These relations determine society’s other relationships and ideas, which are described as its superstructure. The superstructure of a society includes its culture, institutions, political power structures, roles, rituals, and state. The base determines (conditions) the superstructure, yet their relation is not strictly causal, because the superstructure often influences the base; the influence of the base, however, predominates. In Vulgar Marxism, the base determines the superstructure in a one-way relationship.[1] However, in more advanced forms and variations of Marxist thought their relationship is not strictly one-way, as some theories claim that just as the base influences the superstructure, the superstructure also influences the base. (Retrieved in January 2012 from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Base_and_superstructure)

In particular, at this school [Northwest University for Nationalities] there is the teacher Bdud-lha-rgyal who is introducing humanism and inspiring the majority of his students to rethink human life. The young students understand the need for having a human life. (p.109)

Interestingly, an article, “Life and Task” (*Mi tshe dang las don*) written by a professor, Rnam-sras, from Qinghai University for Nationalities in Ziling appears in the same column on the same day (May 8, 1999). Rnam-sras proposed that the May Fourth Movement was a Chinese students’ patriotic movement and is still an example of patriotism for young students. Rnam-sras believed that Tibetan students should also receive profound encouragement from this event and build confidence for the future (p. 2). Rnam-sras also believed that young Tibetans should have a new direction because of Chinese reform and open policies. This direction is to focus on the economic or material life. Rnam-sras is not a new thinker and uses many historical Tibetan figures as examples of great and successful persons, including emperors and religious practitioners. Rnam-sras also emphasizes the value of traditional culture, and he often quotes from traditional doctrines. From these two articles, we can see that there are differences between today’s traditional scholars and the New Thinkers, as well as between the positions of teachers from Ziling and Lanzhou. Indeed, on one hand, Tibetans, especially young Tibetan writers, have found new opportunities to develop material wealth after China’s reform. On the other hand, they face many challenges to protect their own culture because of the expansion of capitalism and materialism. I feel that today money drives everyone in Tibet, rather than religion or other powers. It is a risk rather than an opportunity for Tibetans to focus only on earning money. Many Tibetans may become more globalized, but they also seem to be becoming poorer and more fragile.

Tibetans seem to want to have a hero who can lead Tibet to victory, and this heroism dominates the minds of young Tibetans because Chinese educational textbooks endorse the behaviors of national heroes and heroines who sacrificed their lives in the establishment of a new China. Their stories make up a large portion of Chinese and Tibetan language textbooks (as well as many movies). This is also one strategy the Chinese government uses to carry out the “patriotic education” of its students. This form of education has caused Tibetan students to question who their heroes are. They have begun to ruminate about the past and become depressed about the present. Their nostalgia led to the popularization of the epic poetry of King Gesar. Tibetans believe King Gesar was a real Tibetan hero. He was capable of using this sword to defeat his enemies, though he had to endure many brutal trials. Now Tibetans enjoy singing the longest epic in the world and want to emulate their hero.

Tibetans have no choice but to choose writers who pick up their pens rather than their swords in order to cut the throats of their enemies. In this way, the writers have become heroes, and this is why Tibetan literature has flourished in the 1980s. Writers have had the freedom to express their ideas implicitly, but not explicitly. This is why Bdud-lha-rgyal also argues that young Tibetans only have one sword, and it can cut

everything. There is no doubt that this sword finally cut its own culture since Zhogs-dung set out to destroy traditional Tibetan values. There is a Tibetan saying, which clearly indicates risk of playing with a double-edged sword: “one should be careful with a double-edged sword of knowledge; it will cut off one’s own head if one misuses it.” It is true that the New Thinkers have used the sword of knowledge to cut Tibetan values, and they have become the opponent of Tibetan people and culture. The New Thinkers frequently attack traditional culture as their enemy since Zhogs-dung discovered plenty of negative elements in Tibetan traditional culture.

Byang-skar (This is the pen name of Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs) wrote, “Overthrow the Old schemas and Welcome a New Era” (*Bag chags rnying rul gsar brje byed, dus rabs gsar ba gdong gis bsu*) in *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* on January 1st, 2000. The main point of the article was that Tibetan material living conditions have improved significantly because of Chinese reform policies, and this material development will bring spiritual change for Tibetans. Material development was accomplished by external influences but not through self-awareness. Therefore, Tibetans need another big leap in order to reflect on history and culture in order to reach the goal of the 21st century for all Tibetans, which will be achieved through modernization (January 1st, 2000, p. 3).

“The Pattern of Culture” (*Rig gnas 'khyer so*) was published on June 26th, 2000, and the author is a new thinker named Nyi-gzhon. He explained in his article that pattern means the way of thinking, the core of which is a worldview and social norm. Nyi-gzhon (2000) argued that, “Although we do not want to evaluate the old schemas, it is an unavoidable task to do so” (p. 3). The reason why Tibet is in decline is that Tibetans have a religious worldview and values, and this pattern of culture not only contributed to Tibet’s decline, but it also contributed to the decline of the Mongolian Empire. Therefore, today it is inevitable to build a new pattern of a culture, which takes into account the nature of social development. His article ended with a few Chinese phrases about development. For instance, “development is totally reasonable,” “one must be lifted if one is backward,” “innovation is the core and dynamic of development,” and “one nation cannot advance if the nation loses its capacity of innovation” (p. 3). Nyi-gzhon’s points are in agreement with those of other New Thinkers who saw religion as the enemy and tried to align themselves with the experiences of advanced nations. They assume that importing new ideas to let Tibet rise is the only option for Tibetans. The New Thinkers often condemn religion because they think that the religious believers cannot notice human value but only divine value.

Another article discusses a newly published book, and it appeared in *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* on November 8th, 2000. The article was titled “Human Value: A Review of Yon-dan’s Article ‘Tradition and the Contemporary’” (*Mi yi rin thang: Yon-dan gyi srol rgyun dang deng rabs zhes pa bklags pa*). The author, Zhi-bde-nyi-ma, (2000) wrote, “To attack tradition is for development” (p. 3). Zhi-bde-nyi-ma believed that the development

of western countries advocates attacking and splitting from tradition. He also quoted Zhogs-dung's words to demonstrate that Tibetans are slaves to their beliefs.

Once these articles were published, more people demanded to see additional works of this sort in *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan*. The debate between traditional values and the ideas of the New Thinkers became increasingly heated. The newspaper office was targeted by Tibetan groups because people believed that the newspaper leaned toward Zhogs-dung's view and published more articles which supported the New Thinkers. *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* received many letters to the editor during this time. There was even a rumor that the government ordered the newspaper to choose the softer way in order to help destroy Tibetan culture. This rumor and other complaints discouraged the chief editor of *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* from publishing more articles, and the office stopped publishing articles about the debate on Tibetan culture. The chief editor finally decided to ignore articles regarding the New Thinkers vs. tradition debate and stopped publishing any of them in the newspaper. As an editor from the newspaper pointed out:

The newspaper neither supports Zhogs-dung's view nor other points of view. It did not support either side of the debate. After the editors ignored the many article proposals related to this subject, the newspaper managed to detach itself from the debate. (Interview, May 2009)

Writers have sought other channels to express their views in order to continue the debate. Many of them have begun to publish their works in other self-edited magazines (not official journals), and some have even managed to publish books. In particular, some traditional scholars and monks reacted to Zhogs-dung's works, and many students have promoted it in universities. Meanwhile the New Thinkers have also tried to offer new values for Tibetans.

CHAPTER 7

RECONSTRUCTION AND NEW VALUES

1.0 Introduction

Tibetan New Thinkers have managed to present their ideas to young Tibetans through their articles in *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* from 1999 to 2000. The newspaper stopped publishing any articles related to the cultural debate at the end of 2000. The New Thinkers started to look for other ways to publicize their points of view. Some of them published two series of books named *bdag dpe tshogs* (literally, *bdag* means self⁷⁸ and *dpe tshogs* means series of books) and *bla dpe tshogs* (*bla* has many meanings, and I assume that here it means life⁷⁹ and that *dpe tshogs* means series of books) to present their views and devalue traditional culture. To date, eight New Thinkers have published at least 15 books (I have no information on where the funds for publishing these books came from).

2.0 The New Thinkers and Modern Values

One explanation the New Thinkers put forth as an explanation for why Tibet is behind is the assassination of the last Tibetan emperor. Glang-dar-ma⁸⁰, was assassinated by a Buddhist monk named Lha-lung Dpal-gyi-rdo-rje (b.750?) in 842, CE. The death of the last emperor invoked civil war and the dissolution of the Tibetan empire. The New Thinkers think fondly of the Tibetan imperial period, and they criticize the reckless action of the monk, though Buddhists traditionally thank the monk because of his protection of Buddhism. It was said that the king or emperor had planned to destroy Buddhism, but this monk killed the king in order to defend Buddhism. The New Thinkers believe that this monk's action destroyed the Tibetan empire and that he should be a historical criminal, not hailed as a hero. The New Thinkers have always been critical of religion. They believe that religion destroyed the Tibetan Empire and that it keeps Tibet from modernizing today. As 'Gyan Sangs-rgyas-don-grub (2008) observed:

It is easy to notice that culture is the basic force of evolution and social development. [...] The reason why [Tibet] cannot catch up with other nations is that there was no cultural destruction

⁷⁸ The New Thinkers highlight the word "self" because they assume that Buddhism ignores "self" because Buddhists hold this notion of "no self."

⁷⁹ The New Thinkers use the term "life" to contradict the Buddhist notion of the next life.

⁸⁰ Retrieved in Decemeber 2012 from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lang-dar-ma>

and innovation [in Tibet]. Our culture was destroyed once by Buddhism in the Early Middle ages, but there was no more destruction after Buddhism became our tradition. [We] not only cannot pull out its root, but also our conservative ideology prevents it from having a blemish and has protected it well until today. (p. 230)

This idea hints that Glang-dar-ma's attempted to destroy Buddhism because it was necessary for social development, and his assassination is an indication of how powerful an influence Buddhism is in Tibet.

2. 1 Rationalism

The New Thinkers want to build a culture for Tibet that is based on science, rationality, and individualism. They emphasize rationalism, but they ignore the emotional side of human nature. The New Thinkers support economic development so that a modern Tibet can compete with other nations. As Allen (1997) pointed out, "[A] time of revolution, however, is an uneasy time to live in. It is easier to tear down a code than to put a new one in its place, and meanwhile there is bound to be more or less wear and tear and general unpleasantness."⁸¹

One of the most popular and influential books produced by the New Thinkers is Zhogs-dung's first book entitled *The Call of Eloquence* (*dpyod shes rgyang 'bod*). In it, the author advocated for rationality, essentially a culture based on logic. The author criticized Tibetan traditional culture as being irrational, especially the religious views.

Rationality is a key word used by the New Thinkers to attack opposing views because they think the characteristic of religion is superstition and irrational thinking. As Barker (2008) pointed out:

Modernity has been associated with an emancipatory project through which enlightenment reason would lead to certain and universal truths. This would lay the foundations for humanity's forward path of progress. That is, enlightenment philosophy and the theoretical discourses of modernity have championed 'Reason' as the source of progress in knowledge and society. [...] Enlightenment thought is marked by its belief that Reason can demystify and illuminate the world over and against religion, myth, and superstition. For enlightenment thinkers, human creativity, rationality, and scientific exploration mark the break with tradition that modernity heralds. The moral-political agenda of the 'project of modernity' is best encapsulated in the French Revolutionary slogan "Equality, Liberty, Fraternity." (p. 188)

In Zhogs-dung's second book, *The Spirit of Suspicion* (*Dogs slong snying stobs*), he declared that [religious] faith is a major barrier for secular culture, and he does not have faith in religion, but he has faith in reason (2008, p. 7). Zhogs-dung hints at the idea that religion is irrational, and he makes this accusation without a careful examination. As Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs argued:

⁸¹Retrieved in April 2011 from: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/allen/ch5.html>

We want to change the way of thinking among Tibetans. In particular, Tibetans may have faith in their hearts, but they do not have a survey on their minds. The way Tibetans think traditionally is without examination. We need a scientific way of thinking and diverse ways of thinking. His [Zhogs-dung's] main point is to change the way of thinking in Tibet. Tibetans' minds are controlled by religion, and the religious figures assume that they are always right and others are wrong. For example, if one says there is no rebirth, then they will strongly argue he or she is wrong. Religion certainly and strongly influences Tibetan society and history. It even divides the society into two parts: great holy religious culture and secular culture. The secular part cannot be developed and attached to religion. (Interview, September 2010)

Zhogs-dung is motivated by Enlightenment principles, and he replicates their main ideas. The Enlightenment was “marked by increasing empiricism, scientific rigor, and reductionism, along with increasing questioning of religious orthodoxy.”⁸² The New Thinkers have tried to reproduce a faith in reason, generally accompanied by rejection of faith in religion.

We can only judge rationality through a culture rather than a universal standard. So far, our knowledge cannot give reasons for every event and happening. It is hard to claim what is rational and what is irrational. That is why it is hard to design a reasonable road map of development for all nations in the world.

2.2 Controversy Between Development and Traditional Culture

A New Thinker, ‘Gyan Sangs-rgyas-don-grub (2005), stated, “[Tibetan traditional culture] directly or indirectly hinders the development of contemporary Tibetan humanism” (p. 58). The New Thinkers want to import notions of western society in order to undertake a cultural revolution in Tibet in order to awaken Tibetans to be rationalist and individualist. They believe scientific spirit and attitude may help to save Tibet as a nation. Tibetans are awakened if the personality of Tibetans is changed by universal values and if they realize their human ability rather than the power of deities.

‘Gyan Sangs-rgyas-don-grub (2005) pointed out that the liberation of personality is the first step for social modernization (p. 102). The New Thinkers acknowledge one positive function of religion, which is that religion help people overcome their fear of other people and of natural disasters. However, the New Thinkers also warn that this function can drive people to take refuge in deities, which, in turn, reduces their ability to solve problems. The New Thinkers claim that it is necessary to destroy elements of Tibet's fundamental culture, including its worldview, values, and social norms (‘Gyan Sangs-rgyas-don-grub, 2005, p. 262). Most people agree that Tibet's religious tradition has protected Tibet from sinicization, and China's government sometimes feels puzzled about Tibetan issues when it comes to dealing with the power of religion. As a report on the Phayul Web site said on January 28th, 2011:

⁸² Retrieved in September 2010 from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment

Zhang Qingli, CPC's Tibet Party chief said in a rare interview that Tibet, being a difficult geographical area poses great difficulties in development activities because the region not only has the harshest natural conditions but also the most complicated social environment.⁸³

It seems that the New Thinkers have assisted the Chinese regime in accelerating the secularization of Tibetan society in order to gain better control of the Tibetan people. Kolas and Thowsen (2005) noted that:

Chinese authorities have made efforts to redefine Tibetan culture as non-Buddhist and have allowed if not actively supported a wide range of secular cultural expressions. This can only be understood as a conscious political strategy to secularize Tibetan culture. This strategy is in line with the CCP view of religion as an essentially detrimental social force and with associated modernist notions of the need to fight superstition and backwardness in order to achieve progress and scientific development. (p. 180)

Development is a change which takes place everywhere in the world. The New Thinkers categorize the traditional culture as undeveloped or backward because it is old and unchanged. The traditional values and lifestyles are apparent signs of underdevelopment or backwardness and are perceived to be a formidable obstacle to necessary socioeconomic progression. New Thinkers also believe that if Tibetans want to be successful in terms of socioeconomic development, they need to denounce and eradicate the elements or influences of traditional culture. As Nyi-gzhon argued:

The religion [Tibetan Buddhism] needs to conduct a self-check in order to find out: Is this right or is that wrong? There is nothing like that happening today. When it comes to religion, religion is considered to be the absolute truth.

Some people disagree with us because we attack tradition and religion. That is important. Others just dislike some sentences [ours]. [They claim that] you want to destroy religion, and that is wrong. Is that all? Not like that, to destroy religion, it is impossible to destroy religion.

It is urgent to split religious and secular culture. Now what we mostly need and what is important is to build a system of secular culture. The religious culture cannot be a priority. The position of two cultures in the minds of Tibetans, including religious figures, officials and common people, should be switched. Otherwise, religious standards control their bodies, speeches, and minds. In other words, the religion directs the way of producing products and doing business.

For example, important notions of Tibetans are: the pursuit of the next life, less desire, less work, and fewer tasks (it is not necessary to earn more money, even if you do business, you do not want to do many things since it is useless), and so on. These ideas guide Tibetans' thoughts and behavior. Some may argue that corrupted officials even make money illegally. Even though, deep in their hearts they still think this is wrong. They have these kinds of feelings in their minds naturally. (Interview, July 2010)

⁸³Retrieved on January 30th 2011 from:

<http://www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?id=29002&article=Fighting+Tibetan+separatists+complicated+than+Uygurs%3a+official>

The New Thinkers are mistaken in their claim that Buddhist values curb Tibetans' interest in seeking material development. Other Tibetan scholars notice that the New Thinkers have misunderstood or misused the Buddhist term '*dod chung chog shes*, (literally less desire and knowing enough) because the New Thinkers blame this phrase for reducing Tibetans' desire to compete economically. This phrase actually means that one should be satisfied or happy in the situation in which he or she lives because the situation may change through personal effort and outside forces if one does good deeds.

Impermanence, one of the main tenets of Buddhist philosophy, holds that everything in the world is changing, including people's thinking, their living conditions, and their lives. All of this shows us that Tibet's religion has never actively blocked development in Tibet. As it turns out, development is being blocked by people who have not understood Tibet's religion. Buddhism never advised Tibetans to walk away from material development. It often directs Tibetans to be happy with their current situation and to avoid unhappiness with too much desire. According to Buddhism, desire is infinite if one is not able to discern what is enough. It is a normal condition to never be satisfied. A monk once told me:

Happiness relies on the current situation. For instance, a beggar must be delighted if I offer him 100 Yuan [about 10 Euros and 15 U.S. dollars]. A rich man does not care, and may even be unhappy, if I offer him the same amount of money. The situation is helping us to judge happiness and the level of our desire. We have the ability to magnify or minimize our desires. It is very dangerous if we infinitely expand our desires. Unlimited desire will bring disaster to others and to ourselves. (Interview, June 2008)

We can see that this monk's argument is true if we look back at the global financial crisis that occurred in 2008. People driven by their desires and greed have damaged the world economy. Ultimately, it was the greed and desire of a few businessmen who brought down the economies of entire countries. People all over the world have suffered because of the desires of a few. Only now, some countries are beginning to recover from the effects of this greed. It could be argued that Buddhist goals of helping others and trying to eliminate, or at least limit, desire has benefits for all people, no matter what their religious beliefs.

Zhogs-dung's works borrow the writing style of a Chinese critical writer Lu Xun (鲁迅 1881-1936) in criticizing all aspects of Tibetan culture from child rearing, school education to the *Tulku* system, and social development to religious practices. Zhogs-dung (2008) argued, "I think, there is no other reason for being backward except the culture or negative schemas. [...] I am saying that it is necessary to destroy the old schemas in order to get rid of backwardness" (p. 52). Zhogs-dung's illusion is that development is defined in terms of living necessities and material property and that the Tibetan culture discourages Tibetans from seeking material development. Ironically, Zhogs-dung is also critical of teachers and other officials who are profit-oriented and uninterested in the wellbeing of the people. Many readers complained that his arguments often contradicted

each other. For example, he argued that the religion discourages business, but he also criticized the fact that many monks are engaged in business because they sell their religion for profit. This argument tells us that Tibetans are material-oriented and that they want to have more money and material things. We know they are not renouncers, and they compete with their neighbors to gain whatever is available. There are too many fights between brothers, sisters, parents, and children when one family member's material wealth affects another's. Zhogs-dung knows that even monks can be greedy. Religion will not take the desire for material wealth away from Tibetans. Tibetans have strong desires for material things, and the evidence of their greed show that Tibetans do have a sense of competition.

Nomadic herders fight with neighbors over land or property. Farmers often fight with neighbors because one family's cow enters another family's farm or because one family wants to access to water irrigation earlier than another family. Tibetans are as interested in economic empowerment as anyone else. Zhogs-dung often ignores this reality and assumes that Tibetans have given up on any hope for prosperity in this life and are looking forward to better times in the next life. This is a generalized view of Tibetan people imagined by many contemporary Tibetan and non-Tibetan scholars alike.

Many younger Tibetans and the New Thinkers assume that this practice misrepresents real events and keeps Tibetan civilization behind modern times. For example, reincarnated lamas have no scientific knowledge of disease, but they ask their patients to perform certain rituals in their treatment rather than recommending that they see a doctor. Younger Tibetans and New Thinkers believe that many Tibetans have lost their lives because of this kind of misjudgment and misinformation.

The effect of rituals is not verifiable because no scientific research has been conducted on this issue in Tibet, and the experience of Tibetans is the only evidence so far. According to the Chinese master Jingkong (净空大师) (2010), the ritual itself may not cure the disease, but peoples' minds cure their own diseases when people give up their feelings of attachment and fantasy to reset the biological balance in their bodies.

Ordinary Tibetans believe that the Buddha and other deities help them survive any difficulties in their lives. This is the reason why Zhogs-dung (2008) wrote in his second book, "I do not have a faith, and no one else is brave enough to say these true words up to now" (p. 7). Both Byang-skar and Gcod-pa-klu-rgyal praised Zhogs-dung's announcement and argued that this is a radical and significant point because no Tibetan, so far, has dared to say he or she is a nonbeliever of religion (Interview, September and October 2010).

A Tibetan scholar, Hungchen, argued, "They wrote many things about religion, but they did not know anything about religion. Zhogs-dung may not be able to explain what he wrote about religion. His arguments are just meaningless slogans" (Interview, May 2010). Hungchen continued:

The New Thinkers' main reason for attacking religion or traditional culture is that they think these two things are obstacles to developing Tibetan society. Actually, they do not know much about religion or Buddhism. Therefore, later they have to change their topic or direction, and they stop discussing religion when they start to talk about *mi bu* (man or mankind), *dkyel yangs* (tolerance), *bzan po'I snying stobs* (spirits of ancient Tibetan Emperor), etc. (Interview, May 2010)

The New Thinkers began to change their target of criticism after many Tibetans disapproved of their arguments. The tension of the debate has lessened, and both sides seem to have stopped attacking each other. However, Tibetan monks still defend their privileges in Tibetan society, and students continue to criticize them for this attitude. In general, more and more people assume that the New Thinkers want Tibet to move forward and build a strong and prosperous society. It is important to note that Tibetans are not critical of the New Thinkers as long as they refrain from being critical of religion. Many Tibetan students at universities are inspired by the New Thinkers and have worked to accomplish their goals, which is to encourage Tibetans to be individualists and capitalists and maximize their own profits at any cost. Some students were imprisoned by the Chinese government when they started discussing political issues. The New Thinkers may have unconsciously brought fundamentalism to the younger generations, and the government labeled them separatists.

Nobody denies that Tibet is a less developed society from a materialistic perspective. Nobody denies that Tibetans need and want development like anyone else. The New Thinkers want development in Tibet. The problem is that they seem to want development at the expense of Tibet's religion and culture.

One cannot deny that Tibetans are materialistic. Many people question why Tibetan monasteries in Tibet have accumulated countless treasures and possessed material wealth to build up brilliant temples and other religious structures. It is obvious that even high-ranking religious people appreciate the importance of material wealth. It is useless to complain about the traditional culture regarding property because it is obvious that Buddhism has not led Tibetans to renounce material wealth. In fact, during Tibet's history, the monasteries became places where Tibetans could preserve their wealth because criminals were less inclined to steal from religious places, and people often placed their valuables in the monasteries to protect them from theft. Of course, this ended up being an unsuccessful strategy when the Chinese destroyed many Tibetan temples during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Today thieves steal treasures from monasteries and sell them in back market. Monks have to sleep in the dark and cold chanting halls of their monasteries in order to protect their valuable treasures at all times.

The New Thinkers have begun to change the direction of their criticism. They have said more recently that they are not critical of Buddhism itself but of the way Tibetans practice it. We can hear this kind of complaint about religion from educated Tibetans who are interested in business. Another big riddle for them is why ordinary Tibetans offer their earned money or property to monasteries or spend their money for religious

purposes. Money-oriented Tibetans never ask themselves why they cannot give away a few cents without any benefit to themselves. If they have an answer to the question of why they became selfish; they may understand the behavior of ordinary Tibetans and the importance of their religion. In fact, Buddhism is a kind of science, which focuses on the nature of our mind. The goal of Buddhism is to clean or calm down our minds in order to eliminate our illusions and obtain freedom. I think it is not necessary to compare Buddhism to modern science as many Tibetans try to do.

Zhogs-dung (2008) argued, “So, belief or faith is one of the main barriers to developing a secular culture” (p. 7). For this reason, it is necessary to establish a secular culture for Tibet in order to catch up with other developed nations in the world. According to Zhogs-dung, a new culture for Tibet is necessary for a new Tibet, and Tibet’s traditionalists do not have the right to select the essence of that new culture (p. 250). He simply assumed that to generate a new person with a new ideology is analogous to building a new house with new materials. Zhogs-dung’s ideas hint that traditional culture and Buddhist culture must be destroyed if Tibetans want to see a strong nation and a brighter future. Therefore, it is right to deny Tibet’s traditional culture and bring a new ideology to Tibet. It is clear that the New Thinkers are not interested in the simple reapplication of the Chinese Cultural Revolution to destroy physical things or religious objects, but they use different techniques to convince Tibetans to have a new ideology. This is exactly what happened during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The goal of the New Thinkers is to destroy the power of religion in order to secularize Tibet’s culture. Essentially, the Chinese Cultural Revolution seems to have accomplished this goal until Tibetans started practicing their religion openly again in the 1980s.

The New Thinkers believe that men should rule men rather than having gods rule men. As Zhogs-dung (2008) asked in his second book, “Is it possible to do business if [we] are just interested in religion?” (p. 241) Zhogs-dung may have forgotten that most Tibetan children go to school, and they have the same desires for material things that non-Tibetan children have. Today’s Tibetan children might spend only one or two hours a day studying traditional language, literature, and culture. Furthermore, since China moved to a capitalist economy in the 1980s, many Tibetans have become involved in business, and some of them have become quite wealthy. Many Tibetans could not participate in the market economy because they lacked necessary skills and knowledge for high-income jobs or businesses. As a religion, Tibetan Buddhism only condemns Tibetans who are more interested in pursuing profits. In some cases, the New Thinkers’ accusation is correct and hits the problem of Tibet’s tradition. Today religious institutions and monks still have great influence and prestige because of the force of faith in religion. Some monks manipulate people’s faith or take advantage of others in order to achieve their own personal goals. Still we can see that the problem is not generated by those people and their religion, but rather by the misbehaviors of few monks, and even few Tulkus. Although a few groups or individuals do not appreciate having a religious role, it

has been a solution for the human spirit for many centuries. It is as natural for Tibetans to follow their ancestors or religious leader today as it was in previous times. As Nietupski (1999) pointed out:

Divinities, demons, the forces of good and evil, and the ultimate were very real to these people, and anyone who hoped for success was well advised to ascertain the status of his endeavor with respect to the unseen forces of religion. The lamas and prognosticators of Labrang were well equipped to provide advice. As elsewhere, even in the so-called secular West, religion played an important and primary role in the people's lives. (pp. 10-11)

Commerce plays a more important role than religion in contemporary Tibet. Recently, the reality in Tibet has been that economy is gaining power to control people. Many people take refuge in religion with the aim of improving their living conditions and financial achievement in life. For most Tibetans, religion is also a reciprocal system in which they can exchange things. For example, many Tibetans prefer to seek help from mountain-gods rather than from monks or images of the Buddha in monasteries because they assume that the mountain-gods will help them immediately, and many believe that the mountain-gods take action as quick as lightning. This shows how Tibetans are eager to shorten the cycling of the reciprocal period when they offer things to monasteries and mountain-gods for help. It is wrong to say that Tibetans do not have a strong desire for material benefits and that religion prevents them from seeking development.

A Tibetan professor, Bdud-lha-rgyal, stated:

We just want to build a good society for Tibetans. It is necessary to improve people's living conditions. Most of my thoughts are from Chinese resources because I read many books in Chinese. (Interviewed in 2009)

Also, Nyi-gzhon described the ideal society of Tibet:

The development [of Tibet] should be the same as the others. It is unavoidable [to pursue development], and it is just like a rock is falling from the top of a mountain. It must to go [or roll]. It is the direction of the world today. In this case, it is better to go with this challenge than to avoid it. [Tibet] has to move forward. [...] If there is a policy and environment where individual freedom and interests are protected, that is development. [...] For example, a political entity that is led by secular culture will create an environment in which freedom of religious practice exists. What would it be like if religion dominated the culture? Then other different religions will also find it difficult to survive, and secular culture will become narrow-minded, because religion always has some prejudice or bias. One cannot say that the view of religion is wrong. Religious prejudice always shows that it always holds truth. If we disagree with religion, then someone complains about us. (Interview, July 2010)

2.3 Equality and Inequality

The New Thinkers often discuss Tibetan culture without having an understanding of the real situation. They are quick to blame Tibet's traditional culture without finding out

whether the culture is really at fault. The New Thinkers criticize religion for the inequality of individuals in Tibetan society. They believe the system of dual politico-religious (unity of religious and political authority) and the Tulku system are the negative systems, which have led Tibet into decline and caused inequality among Tibetans. As Byang-skar (2005) argued:

Gradually Buddhism monopolized the thought of Tibetans. Further, it developed a strange ruling system, which is called a dual politico-religious system. Here [I] want to emphasize that histories of other nations in the world showed that the monopolizing thought is the basic foundation for dictatorship of a government. [...] Therefore, what else could be the ghost who cut the root of happiness of human beings and a leader who can manipulate, what else to weaken a nation except it [dictatorship]? (pp. 19-20)

The interesting thing is that the New Thinkers ignore actual social conditions, though they know perfectly well who has had power in Tibet for the past 60 years. If the Tibetan clergy are operating a dictatorship, why are they protesting in the streets for religious freedom?

The New Thinkers believe that the Tulku system creates inequality among Tibetan people, and they believe this system is a barrier to freedom and democracy. It is true that in this system some people are born into high social status. The New Thinkers believe this is against the Western paradigm that all men are equal at birth. Zhogs-dung (2008) argued, “The minds of Tibetans cannot be liberated if the Tulku system does not end. It can be said that the seed of hope for Tibetans is possible to grow the day this system completely vanishes” (p. 152). Zhogs-dung criticized the Tulku system⁸⁴ because it creates inequality of Tibetans and because lamas are often seen as superior to common people.

Most Tibetans are still illiterate and/or uneducated so they are not able to appreciate the connection between science and Buddhism. Many of them simply hope that they will be free from a life of suffering if they worship Buddhist doctrines and practice Buddhism as a religion. This distortion of Buddhism and its practices has given the monks and monasteries some advantage over the populace. Lay Tibetans look to their religious leaders to take care of their present and future lives. The privilege of religious figures has even evolved into the Tulku system, which helps them to retain their power and influence. We cannot find evidence to deny the theories of reincarnation, but we can easily see that

⁸⁴ The Tulku (*sprul sku*) system has been an extremely important aspect of Tibetan society and Tibetan religious life for many centuries, and continues to this day to capture the imagination of people around the world. It is unique to Tibet, and to those cultures whose development has been influenced by Tibetan Buddhism, including Mongolia and the Himalayan states. While the notion of rebirth or reincarnation is found throughout the Buddhist world, nowhere else do we find this particular practice – of identifying young children as the rebirths of religious teachers and leaders who have recently passed away, and then installing them in their place – developed as thoroughly and as systematically as in Tibet. (Retrieved in March 2012 at Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford, <http://hcbss.stanford.edu/event/symposium-tulku-system>)

political influence and wealth profoundly affect the Tulku system, which is the system by which high-ranking lamas can choose their reincarnations. Without doubt, this system is created to select a successor among members of the clergy, and it has advantages and disadvantages. For example, it can stabilize the leadership of a monastery and reduce conflict in choosing a leader. It also brings immense privileges for the chosen successor, and his (most Tulkus are male in Tibet) or her relatives.

Rme-sprul (2002) is himself a Tulku, and he mentioned that, "There are many forged reincarnations in Tibet," and he acknowledged the negative influence of the Tulku system. He also suggests that we cannot blame all reincarnations because many true reincarnations promote Buddhist education and help others to seek ultimate mental liberation (p. 121).

Chinese prejudice and racial discrimination generate more inequality in Tibet than the Tulku system does. Some liberal Tibetan writers often mention that Tibetans have become second-class citizens in China. How can Tibetans get meaningful freedom and democracy in reality? The problem with the New Thinkers' analysis is that they never put current Tibetan cultural issues into the current Chinese sociopolitical genre. They often isolate Tibetan culture from the Chinese current political and economic situation when they complain about traditional culture and its limitations. Maybe the current policies of China do not allow the New Thinkers to discuss certain issues because many of them are sensitive or secret.

If this is the case, the New Thinkers may not be able to tell us the truth. It may be that they just created their own vision of Tibetan society and culture rather than a picture of the real situation. It is fair to say that they often trace history back to seek the root of Tibet's decline, and they assume that Buddhism, and its Tulku system, destroyed the Tibetan Empire and removed Tibetans' ambitions. As Byang-skar (2005) noted, "Looking from the secular world, the Tibetan Tulku system is one of the main reasons for the decline of the nation. Why? This closed the door of 'awakening man's self-awareness' in Tibet" (p. 32). Tibetan monks assume the Tulku system does not have any power to rule Tibetans in any way, and this system is a useful tool for choosing a monastery's leaders. It also makes it more difficult to dispute the authority of a monastery's leader. The New Thinkers are anti-clerical and oppose religious institutional power and influence in all aspects of public and political life, but they do not oppose the involvement of religion in the everyday lives of the citizens. The New Thinkers often use this argument in an attempt to distinguish themselves from the Red Guards of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

It is true that Tibetan religious figures managed to adopt an unusual dual politico-religious system to rule Tibet long after the collapse of the Tibetan Empire. This system relies on reincarnations of high lamas who had a chance to govern certain Tibetan groups until the Chinese Communist Party took over political power in Tibet. China destroyed this dual politico-religious system but not the Tulku system. The reincarnated lamas were

jailed, and the system vanished during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, but many lamas were released from jails and the Tulku system reappeared when China allowed religious practice again in the 1980s. Interestingly, China's authorities also issue official certificates for reincarnated lamas and monks in order to supervise their religious practices and lives. In fact, the old political power system that the Chinese were so critical of was actually never practiced in Tibet after the 1950s.

Interestingly enough, the New Thinkers believe that Tibet is still under the rule of a dual politico-religious system because the mental structure of Tibetans has maintained this system. Sgo Shes-rab-rgya-tsho (2007), a Tibetan monk who supports the New Thinkers, argued that the traditional Tibetan political system may have vanished in the 1950s, but Tibetans still keep many elements of the dual politico-religious system in their hearts. It seems that the seedling has been growing again in people's minds, and this is an indication of repeating a historical accident again in Tibetan society (p. 9).

Similarly, Gcod-pa-klu-rgyal confirmed, "Psychologically Tibetans live in the dual politico-religious system. There is wind, and there is sound. That is it" (Interview, October 2010). This kind of assumption is another reason why the New Thinkers continually criticize traditional culture when they gave up targeting Buddhism. Present-day lamas have no political power unless the Chinese authorities manipulate them in order to avoid social unrest. Ordinary Tibetans may not have any knowledge of the dual politico-religious system, and they simply seek help from their religion. The religious role in Labrang, a Tibetan cultural and Buddhist center in Amdo in the last century, is represented in Nietupski's (1999) survey on travel notes of missionaries who stayed in this region from 1922 to 1949:

Their [Tibetans] belief helped them cope with Labrang's [Labrang] harsh environment, with misfortune, calamity, disease, and death. It helped in decision-making on even the most mundane levels. When to plant, to harvest, to go to market, whether or not to buy new animals, and so on were all matters about which the Labrang Tibetans consulted their religious counselors. (p. 10)

To some extent, Amdo Tibetans still live a similar way and it seems their faith in religion remains strong. Therefore, the New Thinkers claim that the lamas do have the power to direct local people and that they often take advantage of the locals' lack of modern knowledge. For instance, the New Thinkers believe the Tibetan lamas use numerology (*mo*) to make predictions for medical patients, thus discouraging them from seeking medical attention for serious health conditions.

2.4 Self and No Self

Recently the New Thinkers found another topic for their argument, and their most popular phrase is "begin from oneself." This expression caught the eyes of many young Tibetans and scholars because the New Thinkers try to contrast it to the Buddhist concept

of “selflessness,” or “no self.” They assume that Buddhists use selflessness to destroy human nature and to limit human desires. Actually, they misunderstand the term of selflessness and its influence. The Buddha defined this term in this way, “We are formed and molded by our thoughts. Those whose minds are shaped by selfless thoughts give joy when they speak or act. Joy follows them like a shadow that never leaves them.”⁸⁵ Ordinary Tibetans have no idea about the concept of selflessness, and their desires are more or less at the same level as people of other nations. The New Thinkers mistakenly believed that Tibetans lost their human nature and do not have self-awareness. As Nyi-gzhon (2005) argued, “It is a preliminary groundwork to give birth to self awareness. [...] The self is the goal, as well as the method and the center” (pp. 1-2). Nyi-gzhon believed that individual development will bring development to a society, and the basic foundation for individual development is self-awareness. Nyi-gzhon promoted egoism in order to disparage the Buddhist notion of helping others. The New Thinkers assume Buddhist ideas such as “all other sentient beings are our mothers” and “for others” prevents Tibet from developing as a secular society. No seed will generate fruit if it is planted in the wrong field. As Nyi-gzhon (2005) declared, “[We] call for destroying our old schemas [traditional culture]” (p. 19) in which no hope to find any success. Nyi-gzhon also answered the question of what will replace traditional culture if the old culture is destroyed. “The spirit of human nature, which derives from self-awareness, self-esteem, freedom, science, democracy and equability” (p. 19) should replace the spirit of old tradition.

2.5 Universal Values

Universal values have become the core of the New Thinkers’ argument and their dream. The problem is that the Chinese government does not appreciate or welcome universal values in China, and Tibet will not be a special case regarding such universal values. China’s leaders even deny the existence of universal values, and, therefore, Tibetan’s ability to practice them.

The good thing for Tibetans is that they finally have a chance to read about the universal values and western ideas through the New Thinkers’ works. It is hard to predict when Tibetans will really have the right to practice universal values. In particular, the New Thinkers focus on freedom, and the core of their revolution is the mental awakening of Tibetans in a way similar to that of the Chinese political awakening. Zhogs-dung (2008) pointed out, “There could be one thousand problems, but the most important thing is to heighten people’s ideological awareness and educational level” (p. 160). He also admitted that, for 30 years, he himself did not know what freedom was and that it was a

⁸⁵Facebook page of Online Buddhist Class Retrieved June 2011 from:
<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=151535191586094&set=pt.140866602652953&type=1&theater>

strange thing to him. Basically, the current Chinese regime rather than Buddhism prevents Tibetans from realizing or understanding freedom and equality, but the New Thinkers often criticize religion consciously or unconsciously. Tibetans even doubt their real agenda, and it is possible that the New Thinkers are here to preserve the regime rather than break the last fortress of Tibet. The validity of this guess cannot be tested by my data, but history will bring a clear answer to it.

3.0 Reviving the Spirit of Ancient Tibetan Empire (*btsan po'i snyong stobs*)

The spirits of the hero, intellectual, and master are, self-respect, joy, pursuit of samsaric glories, and perseverance through hardship.

Nyi-gzhon (2005, p. 240)

As time went on, the New Thinkers ran out of people to criticize because finally they understood that it is hard to criticize religion and traditional culture because they have no expertise in these areas. But, Phun-tshogs-rgyal (2008), a supporter of the New Thinkers, argued that religion and religious figures not only destroy the quality of personality and renounce this life, but they also ruin the spirit of the Tibetan Imperial Period (p. 11). They also learned that it is impossible to separate religion and society among Tibetans. They changed their direction through their debate with other traditional scholars and tried to address various topics. All the New Thinkers really succeeded in doing was confusing readers. As one Tibetan reader, Tshe-ring-bkra-shis, complained, “They just say what they want to say. Now they are pointless. For instance, it is difficult to understand what Me-lce talked about in his last book. No one understands his point” (Interview, May 2010).

The New Thinkers eventually changed their focus. They began to talk about “the spirit of the ancient Tibetan Empire” (*btsan poi' snying sdobs*). They appreciated the power of ancient Tibetan empires and tried to promote that kind of spirit among young Tibetans. This spirit is somewhat aggressive and violent. They devalue the peaceful attitude of Buddhism in order to make young people feel strong and brave. No doubt, there are controversies in their argument. In his fourth book, *Epoch (gnam sa go 'byed)*, Zhogs-dung urged that Tibetans not use violence in dealing with China but instead advocated Gandhi's⁸⁶ principles of nonviolence.

The New Thinkers hope that either they or other Tibetan intellectuals can replace religious leaders in order to gain power and lead a revolution similar to the Chinese May Fourth movement, which will awaken the masses in Tibet. However, they ignored the reality that the monks do not have any power in Tibet and that the government makes all rules. The result of this movement, they hope, will bring universal values to Tibet, and the traditional values will vanish. A democratic system in Tibet will guarantee the political power of the lay people, and it will also provide freedom of religious practice.

⁸⁶ Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)

The goal of this new system is that men will take over the power from deities and rule Tibet as they did in the period before Buddhism arrived in Tibet. As Me-lce argued:

The cultural spirit of the Tibetan Imperial Period (*btsan poi' snying sdobs*), is amazing. It must be rebuilt or restored. [...] Later we lost it after the rise or spread of religion [Buddhism], and/or religious culture became the mainstream culture [of Tibet]. Before [religious culture] flourished [...] in ancient times, the main culture was the secular culture. What was the spirit of culture at that time? In short, the way of ruling the secular world, the techniques of ruling the secular world. We need it. For example, regarding morality, at that time, a person should be candid and loyal, or in another example, brave and respectful, respectful and wise; there are many kinds of those. [...] That is a reason for development. That kind of thought viewed by a foreigner, or non-Tibetan, it is like nationalism, an aspect of nationalism if he or she does not know about Tibetan culture and history. This kind of view, which is our thought, has aspects of nationalism. But for our scholars, I think if we talk this way, there is a connection. At that time, the culture of the Tibetan Imperial Period was like this. The secular world is the heart of the culture. [...] This is [our] foundation. (Interview, October 2010)

It seems that the New Thinkers often have nostalgia for the Tibetan Imperial Period and seek the ideal world they see in western values. They try to combine the past of Tibetan society and the present of western societies in order to establish a new culture for present Tibet. This created the concept of a unique secular culture for Tibet is an answer to questions such as: Is it necessary to destroy the old culture for a better life in Tibet? What will replace Tibetan traditional culture if it is destroyed? How does one start a new culture?

The New Thinkers assume that the spirit of the Tibetan Imperial Period can go well with the universal values because of the secular characteristics of both. They believe secular culture should dominate Tibetan culture, and religious influence should be reduced to religion itself and its believers. The qualities of universal values and the spirit of the Tibetan Imperial Period can be applied to current Tibetan society in order to awaken Tibetans and revive Tibet. Kapstein (1998) noted:

We must avoid, however, overemphasizing or privileging the role of religion in Tibetan identity formation. There are many Tibetans who are outspoken regarding Tibetan identity, including many who are dedicated nationalists, who are not particularly religious or are skeptical or, frankly, unbelieving. The uniqueness of Tibetan language, culture, and lifestyle and pride in history of relative autonomy provide more than a sufficient ground for their sentiments quite apart from religious belief. (pp. 188-189)

Certainly, the New Thinkers raise nationalism as their flag when they try to attract the attention of young Tibetans. Otherwise, Tibetans may not show sympathy for the New Thinkers because of the New Thinkers' advocacy of secularism. For the moment, the Chinese authorities are suppressing all forms of nationalism among ethnic groups with the exception of Han nationalism. China has also denied the system of universal values, and it has practiced a secular culture without democracy and freedom.

It will be difficult to establish a new system for Tibet without a change in China as well. From this perspective, we can see that the New Thinkers are idealists, and they

really do not go deep into social problems in a real situation. The New Thinkers believe other nations are not influenced by religion and that secular culture has become the mainstream culture. Probably, the actual reality is that the current Chinese society is the most secularized society in the world next to North Korea. The number of people in China identifying as religious believers has increased in recent years. At the same time, the pace of China's economic development is unable to keep up with the demands its citizens are making on it. People in China are discouraged from discussing political reform or other sensitive issues because they do not want to face consequences from the Chinese government. This is probably one reason why the New Thinkers ignore the real situations and why their dreams lead them in a different direction.

4.0 Globalization

MacGee and Warms (2008) believed that, "[G]lobalization is simply one of the most obvious and powerful phenomena in the world" (p. 580). This is particularly true to the Tibetan New Thinkers, whose lives have been affected by capitalism for decades since Chinese reform, and for whom opening policies were launched in a unique way. It has been true that there has been a larger influx of goods into China since the Chinese Cultural Revolution ended than there has been an influx of ideas. The Chinese authorities succeed in blocking information from outside, through their monopolization of the media and their strict censorship policies.

As globalization becomes a tool for directing the desires of all nations, China's tough political environment and sinicization efforts threaten small ethnic groups. Although the New Thinkers defend capitalism and the global cultural stream, they also have a fear of sinicization and marginalization. This is what Appadurai (2008) was concerned about when he wrote that, "For polities of smaller scale, there is always a fear of cultural absorption by polities of a larger scale, especially those that are nearby" (p. 587). Sometimes the New Thinkers discuss Tibetan issues and human rights issues, and they see the world differently from the official mind and the traditional mind.

In this case, the New Thinkers are a group without a great deal of political influence, who perceive and manipulate the catch phrases of thinkers from the Enlightenment period, and who view the goal of Tibet's society differently from the traditional point of resistance. Their borrowed ideas and catch phrases are democracy, freedom, and science, and these terms are frequently used by the actors of the Chinese May Fourth Movement and by contemporary Chinese thinkers. For the New Thinkers, the first two terms contradict China's sociopolitical ideology, and the latter one probably challenges the religious view. The New Thinkers appreciate the fact that the Chinese government supports capitalism for its own economy and globalization for all the world's countries. The New Thinkers do not seem to be critical of the political dictatorship in China.

Globalization pushes nations to take action to resist assimilation and the expansion of homogenized culture, which is led by Americanization and/or commoditization. This tense interaction between politics of a smaller scale and politics of larger scale may not be easily resolved around the world, but the battle will continue globally.

For ordinary Tibetans and monks there is no difference between globalization and sinicization because the result of both of these phenomena will be a loss of traditional Tibetan culture. The pressure of these phenomena generates Tibetan nationalism, and Tibetans try to resist both globalization and sinicization in order to salvage their culture. There are many different definitions of the word “nation.” A nation may not have any characteristic without a unique culture, and Tibetans may understand this. It is hard to judge the level at which Tibetans can perceive the force of globalization and sinicization, but it is certain that Tibetans want to protect their own culture and values, whether they are an independent nation or not.

We should not understand the trend of globalization and sinicization as simply economic transformation. There is a cultural component to globalization as well. The source of a large river might start as a trickle of water in a remote mountain. As the water flows downhill, it collects more and more water. Ultimately, the individual drops of water vanish without a trace. The same can be said of individual cultures as globalization takes hold. Many fear that the result of the New Thinkers’ ideas, if they are actually applied, will be that traditional Tibetan culture will be swallowed up into whatever the world culture becomes. The aggressive claims that the New Thinkers worry about the future of Tibet, or “we will vanish” are empty words and there is no basis for their acknowledgment that “at least we have to struggle until the last moment before our death though we will die somehow” (Interview, Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs, September, 2010).

A Tibetan student asked Zhogs-dung about the value of traditional culture during his lecture at a university, and Zhogs-dung argued that globalization is something that is happening worldwide and that no nation is going to be able to escape this process. He implicitly indicated that Tibetan traditional culture does not have any value for development (Zhogs-dung, 2008, p. 256). Similarly, Me-lce (2003) pointed out that, “The current status of backwardness is created by our culture” (p. 51). These authors believed that there is no way to select the essence from Tibetan traditional culture, and the entire old culture should be destroyed in order to build a new one. This may not represent the philosophy of all New Thinkers because some New Thinkers assert that reform is the right method, and they do not advocate for the destruction of all traditional culture. As Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs argues, “we do not try to destroy the [traditional] culture, but we want to try to change or reform it” (Interview, September 2010).

The New Thinkers have thought that their argument is on the right road and that they could provide a new direction for Tibetans to become a modern nation. They emphasize that modernization is the only road Tibetans and all nations in the world have to take if they want to keep up with globalization.

5.0 To Change the Way of Thinking

The New Thinkers believe that the time is right to awaken the semiconscious Tibetans. They think that Tibetans are living in a stage of “nonwaking and nonsleeping.” That means the New Thinkers believe Tibetans are not sleeping because their eyes are certainly open and looking around, but their brains are giving the impression of being asleep. Their minds just follow the advice of the ancient masters because the masters already have built a road for them, and no one needs to create anything. This is the way the New Thinkers see Tibetan people.

To change the way of thinking is their first and most important task. The New Thinkers claim that Tibetans do not know how to think with their brains. They believe a model of critical thinking with a suspicious attitude should be developed. The traditional values can be torn down with this critical thinking, and a new Tibetan society can be established which is similar to Western societies with the destruction of the Tibetan traditional culture. Their final goal is completed when a Westernized or Americanized Tibet appears in the world and there are none of Tibet’s traditional values and culture left. A secularized Tibet will be established, and the people of Tibet will think rationally and scientifically. The New Thinkers, along with other Tibetan intellectuals have the responsibility and the capability to lead this nation into a new era in which Tibetans will think and behave as Americans or Europeans do. The manners and morality of globalization will replace old-fashioned Tibetan values and norms.

Nyi-gzhon said:

There are two ways to change Tibetans’ old schemas. [...] What are the two roads? To reform, reform is the first one. The second is to reverse. But he [Zhogs-dung] did mean to reverse though the tone of his writings shows a different way. [...] He did mean to reverse, not to destroy everything, and to reform. (Interview, July 2010)

It seems that Zhogs-dung never gave up his main argument in his writing, and he often writes that the old schemas are barriers, and those barriers should be cleared away in order to set up a new secular culture in Tibet. Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs explained:

We know our society and want to make some changes, especially in the way of thinking. But we do not say that our view is correct and others’ views are wrong. At the very beginning, we did not have that kind of thought. The authors have a similar view if we talk about the big picture of Tibetan society, though we have different views individually. Sixty percent of our view is the same. We [Tibetans] cannot take the same trail; we should be concerned about our future. Otherwise we will fail again. (Interview, September 2010)

The New Thinkers’ goal is to directly import the western lifestyle and social norms to Tibet so that Tibet itself can be more modernized. It is easy to assume that the New Thinkers believe western culture is superior to Tibetan culture and that Tibet is a

backward society. They have never thought that the western culture has evolved from traditional culture or that this evolution has positive and negative elements. Their favorite notion, which is critical thinking, does not work well when they admire western culture and survey the socioeconomic context of Tibet. Their delusion of western philosophy greatly misinforms and misleads many young Tibetans. Their attempt to eliminate traditional culture causes apprehensive dispute among Tibetans, and some traditional scholars wrote articles to fight with the New Thinkers. It is apparent that this debate will continue for many years to come.

CHAPTER 8

IMPACT AND REACTION

1.0 Introduction

Tibet's New Thinkers have revived the question about the future of Tibet and its cultural heritage. The New Thinkers assume that there is hope for Tibet if western values replace traditional Tibetan social norms. Some young people have simply accepted this idea, have followed the New Thinkers, and have become modernized men and women. The majority of Tibetans feel that the New Thinkers have threatened traditional culture and religion. A few traditional scholars even wrote essays in opposition to the New Thinkers and for the purpose of protecting Buddhism and traditional thought in Tibet. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the impact of the New Thinkers and the Buddhists' reaction to the New Thinkers. This chapter will also summarize and discuss the conclusions of Part III.

2.0 Impact of the New Thinkers

Few new ideas dominate a society when they are first introduced. Groups that introduce the new ideas are not always readily accepted, either. The New Thinkers use attention-getting terms such as democracy, freedom, and science to attract the attention of young and old Tibetans alike. Many Tibetans label the New Thinkers apostates, renegades, and even Chinese moles. Tibetan scholars dislike the content of the New Thinkers' works, but many scholars appreciate the form of those works. In other words, Tibetans may disagree with the New Thinkers, but they appreciate that their ideas are well-thought-out and organized, and that their materials are well-written.

2.1 *The Impact on Youth*

The New Thinkers have brought a new way of thinking to some students, and many of them have been converted into followers. Some students and ex-monks are in favor of supporting the New Thinkers. There is a reason why young people are attracted to revolutionary ideas. They are full of energy, jobless, and ready to complain about anything or anybody because, in many cases, their education has not helped them to earn a living. They are unhappy with their depressed situation, and they often blame their traditional culture. As a Tibetan scholar observed:

It seems that Bkra-rgyal's argument of devaluing the Tibetan traditional culture indicates that this culture does not have value for making a living. He mistakenly assumed that Tibetans who studied traditional culture, many of them earning college degrees, cannot find jobs from the government. (Interview, May 2010)

It is true that many young Tibetans cannot get jobs after they graduate since the Chinese government gave up the policy of offering government jobs to college graduates at the end of the 1990s. Most of them understand that private companies and state-run companies hire and fire employees based on seniority and job performance, and they feel that government jobs are more secure. The real root of this problem is located in the curricula of the Tibetan schools or colleges because they teach Tibetan grammar [language and literature] from middle school to university. The schools do not provide courses related to practical skills for work places. So, the students do not have skills and knowledge needed to build their futures or earn a living.

Many students have misunderstood the value of Tibetan traditional culture and have gotten lost in the uncertainty of an increasingly globalized world. Tibetans in this state have been attracted to Zhogs-dung's ideas because they believe he is offering them direction. However, it is also true that many of these students are blinded by their own anger into accepting Zhogs-dung's ideas without close examination. In terms of the job situation, it is much easier to find a job in Tibet of one speaks both Tibetan and Chinese. People blinded by Zhogs-dung's ideas may be reluctant to consider this possibility and may blame Tibet's traditional culture instead.

A Tibetan scholar mentioned:

Now the New Thinkers have gained supporters from many schools. Their power gradually dominates the minds of students. Many students know nothing about religion because they went to schools since they were very young. Today there are many kinds of ideas, and the Internet brings a lot of information to Tibetans. (Interview, October 2010)

Many Tibetans know how to survive in their traditional society, but they have difficulty surviving in the developed world where the rules are supposed to be the same for everyone. In the globalized society, people can get ahead if they know how to play the game. Having a desire to play the game and learning how to play it has been difficult for Tibetans, especially those who are illiterate and/or uneducated.

The problem is not caused by the market in Tibet but by power. However, many Tibetans cannot turn back now, nor do they want to. They have to step forward into a new age of modernization and capitalism. This radical development confused locals, and they felt lost. This mix of development and uncertainty has puzzled many Tibetans because they have had to adopt new ways of doing things without the proper preparation. As such, Tibetans have often been labeled as backward because they have been more tied to their traditional culture and religion rather than to modern development. The New Thinkers use the conflicted feelings of Tibetans to generate an answer for themselves, and they argue that to attack traditional culture is the right way to get rid of confusion and

backwardness. In particular, young educated people feel an urge to pursue rapid development, and their education has taught them that their traditional culture should be changed in order to catch up with modern world.

It seems that Zhong-dung's views have not only caught the eyes of Tibetan students but also their hearts. Tibetans lack reading materials of new knowledge in the Tibetan language, and the atmosphere of their schools is spiritless. Gcod-pa-klu-rgyal, who became a New Thinker after he completed his bachelor of arts (BA) at Southwestern University for Nationalities, described his feelings when he first read Zhogs-dung's articles:

When I was studying at the university, in the third year, one day in 1999, I saw the first article of Bkra-rgyal [Zhogs-dung] in a newspaper. In general, at that time, [I] admired or adored literature, but did not know how to appreciate it. First, [I was] too young, second, basically, the environment or culture of university, or general Tibetan culture [is conservative]. [My own] thought is also undeveloped. [It] is just growing. [...] and by coincidence, [...] [I] saw it in the library. After [I] read it, it evoked a feeling of identification. Many articles cannot evoke a feeling of identification. That means one did not agree with the view of other [authors]. Anyway, there would be feelings of anger or hatred. If one read the article with resonance, one may have the feelings of happiness and rejoicing, at the same time evoking a feeling of identification. That is my feeling when I first read the article. [...] As for youths, now, really, we have hope. If there is someone to advocate this kind of different thought and view and can open this kind of field, there is hope. [I] had that kind of thought. (Interview, October 2010)

This young student saw hope in Zhogs-dung's writings, and he later visited Zhogs-dung in Ziling in order to thank him for his inspiration and to join the New Thinkers. Gcod-pa-klu-rgyal has been a radical and an active New Thinker and an author of several books, which advocate Zhogs-dung's notions. Gcod-pa-klu-rgyal argued, "What is in his article? After all, it is for the future of a nation, generally speaking, it is also for the future of (Tibetan) culture. That is the main point" (Interview, October 2010).

This kind of understanding may occur among many students because their eyes are easily attracted to new things, and their knowledge may not be deep. Their primary purpose is to show the facet of their patriotic Tibetan nationalism. It seems that Zhogs-dung's new thought could not brainwash college students significantly, but there is a group of students who are loyal to his ideas. As a Tibetan scholar in Ziling city said, "He [Gcod-pa-klu-rgyal] is a real apostate (*lta log pa*). But his ideas are mostly copied from Chinese writers" (Interview, May 2010).

A young college student, Thub-bstan-bsam-'phel, whom I interviewed in 2009, has been a faithful follower of Zhogs-dung after he read Zhogs-dung's works. He was surprised and shocked when he first read Zhogs-dung's books. He recalled, "The first time I read his book, I focused on every sentence carefully, and I felt that my heart was beating faster than usual. There was a new feeling and animation" (Interview, May 2009). This student grew up in a typical Tibetan cultural environment in which his parents and his friends were faithful to Tibetan Buddhism.

This religion-controlled mind is Zhogs-dung's target. Zhogs-dung argued that lay people should not have the life or faith that monks have. This idea got to the heart of the matter for this student, who had not given much thought to this issue previously. This student has been like other lay Tibetans who respected or received blessings from a lama or monk when they meet one. There is only faith but nothing is beyond it. As he said, "I am one member of the Tibetans, and I do what they do. It is true that I am just like them" (Interview, May 2009). Therefore, he felt fear when he began to read the first book. After he read two books, he felt he should change his thinking in the manner that Zhogs-dung suggested. The student was inspired not to blindly follow the ideas of the clergy and to do some of his own thinking. As he argued, "We should rethink our traditional culture because it is not 100 percent good" (Interview, May 2009). Another young student, Sgren-po, (2008) wrote, "A person named Zhogs-dung raised the thought flag of the 21st century Tibet" (p. 45).

Thub-bstan-bsam-'phel assumed that he was awakened by Zhogs-dung's writings, and he did not trust his religious views any more. He has advocated Zhogs-dung's ideas and has encouraged his classmates to read Zhogs-dung's writings and to wake up from their religious dream, which he believes the sovereignty of Tibetans' minds. He felt sad that his advocating of Zhogs-dung's notion did not bring any positive result.

Other students saw Zhogs-dung as a radical person and criticized him for brainwashing people into abandoning their traditional culture. Thub-bstan-bsam-'phel tried to introduce Zhogs-dung's ideas to his illiterate fellow herdsmen in his hometown, but the local monks defeated his efforts. Thub-bstan-bsam-'phel's relatives and friends on the grassland have kept their distance from him when monks and other people told them that Zhogs-dung has reintroduced the position of the Red Guard to lay Tibetans.

Older herders from Thub-bstan-bsam-'phel's hometown vividly remembered what happened during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and they believed that Zhogs-dung's ideas were similar to those of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Thub-bstan-bsam-'phel even claimed that if any young Tibetan read Zhogs-dung's books carefully, he or she would want to become a New Thinker. However, Thub-bstan-bsam-'phel's case shows that Tibetan youth are interested in new things, and they are entering a new world without having a real understanding of it. Young people often act on impulse and cannot judge things. The New Thinkers have also realized that many young people just blindly follow Zhogs-dung without really understanding his ideas. Phag-mo-bkra-shis described this situation as "dogs ran after nothing, but because of an old dog's barking" (p. 11). He also worried about the aggression of young people and he states that:

Zhogs-dung argues that religion should have its own position [in a society]. But, many young people think that religion should not to have any role [in a society]. It would be good if it disappeared. Youth are sending wrong and dangerous information. [...] For example, nowadays, some people tend to say that religion is opium. Some also try to damage the dignity of religious believers. There are many unhealthy words like these. I think that it is hard for [such words] to come out of the mouth. But the young people think and speak this way. (Interview, July 2010)

Zhogs-dung's promotion of individualism and his deconstruction of Tibetan culture has led young people to rebel against the local traditions. Zhogs-dung himself has also noticed that some young people have physically destroyed objects of worship such as *bsang khri* or a counter, where locals burn offerings to the mountain deities. A young man destroyed the *bsang khri* of his own village, and this created conflict among the villagers about how the man should be punished. They eventually made the young man pay a fine. This young man met Zhogs-dung later and told him that he did this because he tried to follow Zhogs-dung's footsteps. Zhogs-dung assumed that his behavior was similar to those who participated in the Chinese Cultural Revolution. However, Zhogs-dung also said that he advised this person that it was more important for people to change their inner beliefs (Zhogs-dung, 2008, pp. 155-161).

There are many reasons why young people act strangely after having read Zhogs-dung's writings. One important reason is that the current education system ignores young people's skills and knowledge. Another reason is that students accept new ideas quickly without questioning them much. It seems that young Tibetan students only see the surface of their own culture and religion because they never have had a chance to learn about them in depth. Sometimes Tibetan language teachers have touched on traditional values when they introduce classical Tibetan literature to students. Some parents may require their offspring to follow traditional norms, and they visit monasteries with their children in order to receive blessings from the religious clergy. Although it is true that "Tibetan Buddhism has come to symbolize Tibet's national identity" (Karmay, 1994, p. 114), many students go to schools and ignore Buddhist education. They have to spend at least 9 months every year at school to receive modern education and the Chinese version of Marxism. The religious ideology does not have a chance to compete with schools to direct young Tibetans, and students only learn superficial things about religion from their parents or relatives. An overload of schoolwork prevents students from getting involved in other activities except media entertainment, which often emphasizes material desires and a comfortable life.

Even without Zhogs-dung's influence, students of all ages are moving away from practicing their traditional beliefs and rituals. Young Tibetans have never really understood the main ideas of Marxism because of their lack of understanding of Chinese. It is also true that Chinese teachers who are usually sent to Tibetan areas to teach are often the least qualified. Many of them have not even taken political science courses during their own academic careers. As a result of both of these factors, students who are lacking an education about their own culture and of political science are more receptive to Zhogs-dung's ideas than they might have been otherwise.

Stoddard (1994) observed that there was a lack of educational materials of any description in Tibetan areas. She asked, "[W]here are the translations of world literature, poetry, philosophy, art, science, and social studies? Where are the attempts to understand and describe, in modern Tibetan, the modern world? They are almost nil" (p. 154). The

scarcity of new materials made Zhogs-dung's works popular among students, and the students have suddenly found something to read and follow. The popularity of Zhogs-dung's vision fades away quickly when Tibetans, especially religious leaders, have strongly condemned his ideas and led students to rethink their identity with Buddhism. As a university professor, Mgon-po-skyabs, pointed out:

I assigned my students to write essays about any current issues. Then I organized my students to discuss their ideas in classes. I found out that the majority of students wrote essays about religious and temporal issues, which is exactly what Zhogs-dung's group talk about. However, the recent trend is that more and more students do not agree with the New Thinkers, but a few students are favor in their works and support them because they like to quote Zhogs-dung's as a good reference. I think fewer students follow him than before. (Interview, July 2010)

The number of Zhogs-dung's followers among the New Thinkers may not increase, but another group of supporters is waiting for the right time to join them. This group has a special social role in Tibetan society because they are ex-monks who broke their religious vows for different reasons. This group often struggles to find a new position even though others discriminate against them. Zhogs-dung's attack on traditional culture brought hope for them. The cooperation of a few ex-monks and Zhogs-dung's ideas seems to mimic the behavior of a wandering dog in search of meat. Many ex-monks explicitly and implicitly uphold Zhogs-dung's ideas, and they hope to create suitable social roles for themselves. As, Dkon-mchog, an ex-monk argued, "Zhogs-dung is good because he said something others are afraid to say. There are so many bad customs in our society" (Interview, September 2010).

I think the lure of Zhogs-dung's words such as freedom and democracy may catch the eyes of students and ex-monks who desire something that is not available in their current lives. The ex-monks may also need to cooperate with New Thinkers in order to destroy others' attitude toward them as religious vow-breakers or bad guys. Few followers from either group appreciate the works of the New Thinkers in their efforts to separate from the current culture and find a new place for themselves. While their desire for freedom and a new lifestyle is understandable, their aggression against Tibet's traditional beliefs and practices is not. As Tshe-dbang-rdo-rje mentioned, "a radical ex-monk went much further to argue that Shakyamuni Buddha is a liar. This is too much" (Interviewed in 2009).

After the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Tibetans returned to their support of the Buddha's teachings. Many people only have one way of thinking, and they do not question their own beliefs. The New Thinkers tried to think differently, and they encouraged young Tibetans to do the same. Now New Thinkers believe that they should take the credit for changing the way of thinking in Amdo, and they believe that many people express their own opinions. Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs observed:

Traditionally, I could not say what I think, and if I did so, others immediately asked me who I was. The ancient great masters did not come to this point and what you are talking about. Today

many people say 'I think this and that.' Self /free expression become normal now and all this was influenced by this [Zhogs-dung's works]. It cannot be one hundred percent of his influence but a big portion is from his influence. (Interview, September 2010)

The New Thinkers use their imaginations to spread antitradition and antireligion sentiment among young Tibetans. Antireligion is the core of Chinese Marxism because the religion of Tibet makes Tibet's sociopolitical situation more complicated, and the government actually wants to destroy this social system. It seems that they are working on behalf of specific agencies. This is why people think the New Thinkers are misleading young Tibetans who are susceptible to this kind of influence. One writer observed:

It is good that they want to arrange a cultural movement. They are just at the beginning stage in which they have just developed their slogan, a failed slogan. Of course, they can adjust it. Actually, that is not just a movement, but it is a fight. They not only need a strategy, but they also need tactics. They should have avoided misleading young people. They should talk about the real situation [of Tibet] rather than western philosophy or modern ideas. (Interview, October 2010)

The statement above shows that there some positive things to say about the New Thinkers, and this fact may provoke Tibetans to think first and talk or act later. The New Thinkers have pointed out that Tibetans need to think before they act, both in terms of their own lives and in terms of the future for the Tibetan people. For example, a Tibetan may try to build a house without really knowing how. As a result, he may have to tear it down several times, when having a blueprint for the project would have made things much easier. The New Thinkers have succeeded in pointing out to Tibetans that some change has to occur if Tibet is to survive at all, as either a culture, or as a nation. Sometimes Tibetans act spontaneously without thinking about the consequences of their actions.

Tshe-dbang-rdo-rje provided a good example that shows how Tibetans simply implement some monastery projects that waste the resources of the local people but increase the incomes of business people:

Tibetans are lazy, and they do not use their brains. Nowadays, almost all monasteries banned meat in their ritual/ceremony meals, but almost all lamas and monks eat meat. They do not want to consume ritual meals without meat, which are offered by locals, but monks ran into restaurants to have meals with meat after their rituals. Maybe the best way to deal with the meat issue is to reduce meat in ritual meals in order to save the monks' restaurants money. Generally all people eat meat. This notion is dangerous one; people do not think, but take action. (Interview, September, 2009)

The point that needs to be made here is that change must happen in Tibet, but the change must be intentional and well-planned. Tibetans need to improve their capacity to deal with material development, and the development must occur without eliminating traditional practices and beliefs. The New Thinkers have introduced the concept of critical thinking into the minds of Tibetans for whom it may not have existed before. The New Thinkers have also opened the debate for younger generations, and the very fact that

the discussion is occurring at all is significant. Many Tibetans deny the influence of the New Thinkers because they are protective of their traditional culture. A few Tibetan intellectuals found another positive element from the New Thinkers' works, and that is simply that there are fewer spelling errors in their works.

2.2 Fewer Misspelling in the Publications of the New Thinkers

The New Thinkers have had a positive influence on Tibet's publication language. The New Thinkers have tried to build new terms into the Tibetan language. Few scholars appreciate this contribution, while others criticize the New Thinkers for playing word games. For instance, the New Thinkers stopped using the regular Tibetan term *mi* for man or human. Instead, they have used *mi bu*, which means son of man. This originates from a Chinese term *renzi* 人子. The New Thinkers' intention here is to show that they place their faith in human capacity rather than in any nonhuman entity. They argue that man is man, and his dignity should be in his own hands, rather than in the hands of supernatural spirits. The term is *mi bu* the most significant term invented by the New Thinkers. There are other terms, but it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss them. Most of terms the New Thinkers created have originated from Tibetan translations of Chinese philosophical terms. The New Thinkers not only translate Chinese terms into Tibetan but they also absorb new ideas from some contemporary Chinese authors in order to build a new Tibetan culture. As a Tibetan scholar observed:

One can see the source of their [the Tibetan New Thinkers] ideas if one pays attention to their vocabulary or terms. They borrowed many terms from the May Fourth Movement and its actors. Their thoughts are from Chinese books, and you can see that from their quotations. (Interview, May 2010)

Another benefit of reading the New Thinkers' publications is that their books are of a higher quality in terms of language, and grammar, and spelling. As a Tibetan editor, Hungchen, mentioned:

They all [the New Thinkers] are friends, and they share similar ideas but they wrote books in different topics. If one of them writes something, others would carefully read and check his article and provide valuable suggestions regarding grammar and vocabulary. So, the advantage of their books is good *dag cha*, or less misspelling. (Interview, May 2010)

Zhogs-dung (2008) also confirmed in his third book, "Before the selfness book series (*bdag dpe tshogs*) was published, each of us carefully read one's own draft seven or eight times, and everyone also corrected others' drafts several times in exchange" (p. 202).

One New Thinker believes that they have changed the direction of Tibetan literature because prose has become their primary writing style. Poetry is the traditional writing style for most Tibetans. The style of writing has also affected the content of the writing. Rkang-tsha Lha-mo-skyabs stated:

Sanwen 散文 [or prose] has become main style of [Tibet's] magazines, and the tone of writings has changed. This style has been slowly changing the direction [of writings]. The writers of prose focus on current issues more than the poets do. All happened because of Zhogs-dung's articles. Readers also like to read these kinds of articles. Traditionally, Tibetan readers like to read poems. (Interview, September 2010)

An editor of a *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* denied this New Thinker's claim and assumed that most Tibetan writers still write poems according to the articles sent to the editor's office. The editor agreed that different styles of writing have appeared in many newspapers and magazines, but this change came more from the editors than from the New Thinkers' influence. For instance, the editors of *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan* stopped publishing poetry for two or three years, and the writers quickly noticed this trend and started to use different writing styles. Many writers just want to publish their works, and they will adapt their writing style to suit a publication's requirements.

Some benefits have come from the New Thinkers' ideas, even though there are many negative effects as well. Generally Tibetans believe that it is not wise to blame themselves for their limitations and that it is better to explain external circumstances for their limitations, while they do nothing to change themselves in an effort to correct their situation. Zhogs-dung advocated the opposite view, and encourages Tibetans to look within themselves in order to create positive change. This is hardly an original idea, but the fact that it is coming from Zhogs-dung, who is a respected thinker and writer, may inspire some Tibetans.

Unfortunately, in Amdo, young Tibetans use this idea to criticize local lamas and traditional culture, but they do not examine their own behavior. The ideas of the Tibetan New Thinkers spread among students and a few monks quickly, and they also faded away quickly. There was little impact on ordinary people because local people still listen to clergies and trust them. One New Thinker, Nyi-gzhon, noted:

At the beginning, there was little influence from Zhogs-dung. For instance, people started to discuss faith and religion. Unfortunately, somehow this influence faded away quickly. I can say that there is no influence at all now. (Interview, July 2010).

We also cannot deny that some of Zhogs-dung's ideas have deeply affected many monks. Mkhon-po Pad-ma-rig-'dzin from Khams argued:

I think it is good that Zhogs-dung emphasizes separation of religious practice and secular tasks. Many Tibetan masters long ago suggested that Buddhist practitioners should not be involved in secular events such as accumulating wealth and harming others. (Interview, November 2011)

Zhogs-dung is the most well-known layman in Tibet, especially in Amdo, and the seed of his ideas may have or may not have had the chance to grow up in Tibet because of Tibet's altitude and harsh weather. At least the New Thinkers' books give other Tibetans an inspiration to clean up their language, even though many Tibetans disagree with the ideas in those works.

3.0 Tibetans' Reaction to Zhogs-dung's Accusation

Even though we know that many Tibetans disapprove of the New Thinkers, we find very little written criticism of them. Many monasteries and religious leaders have used different forms of action to fight the New Thinkers, though the New Thinkers have never admitted that any Tibetan scholar could powerfully or directly defeat their new ideas. A Tibetan said:

I chatted with some New Thinkers, and they often say that those who oppose them [traditional scholars against the New Thinkers] could not point out their wrongs and mistakes. Basically, they assume that they are on the right boat though there is no sea or ocean in which they can sail their boat in Tibet. (Interview, May 2010)

A Tibetan folklorist, Tshe-dbang-rdo-rje, also confirmed that:

The New Thinkers never admitted the errors in their ideas and argued that no one could point out any stain of their argument. However, later they [the New Thinkers] lost their direction because only few people accept what they claim to be truth. (Interview, September 2010)

How have Tibetan Buddhists reacted to Zhogs-dung's charge? There are several articles written by monks that directly respond to Zhogs-dung's first book and his general argument. I will only discuss the two representative articles written by two *mkhan pos* from Khams, which is in eastern Tibet, and one article written by a *dge lugs pa* monk from Blabrang Monastery in Amdo. There are some benefits to describing how ordinary monks respond to the ideas of the New Thinkers before I analyze the written reactions of Buddhist scholars.

Although many monks and lay Tibetans are unable to produce written criticism of Zhogs-dung's views, they use other actions to resist the influence of the New Thinkers. It was said that many monks bought books written by Zhogs-dung and kept them with their shoes rather than with Buddhist manuscripts. It is a way of demonstrating that they believe that Zhogs-dung's books represent the evil thoughts of a heretic. As Tshe-dbang-rdo-rje pointed out:

The books [of New Thinkers] sold well. People do not like them, but bought them to criticize. [...] Tibetan monks bought a lot of their books, but they do not read the books. They just store the books with their shoes rather than with Buddhist manuscripts. (Interview, September 2010)

It is normal for many religious people who do not have concrete knowledge about Buddhism to think the Buddhist writings are superior to other doctrines. They often assume other doctrines are inferior without examination. Tibetan Buddhists have a tradition of banning people from reading sacred Buddhist manuscripts without a qualified lama's permission. The intent here is to keep Buddhist teachings pure and to protect monks from polluted or evil ideas. The belief is that Buddhists themselves are insiders,

and other religious practitioners are outsiders. This tradition still affects the minds of many monks, and they tend to look down on Zhogs-dung's ideas. Monks also spread rumors saying that those who read the books of the New Thinkers will become bad men or women and that one can be a good protector of Buddhism if one does not become a supporter of Zhogs-dung's new ideas. For example, one Tibetan private school, which is run by a monk, requested that its students not read Zhogs-dung's books, and it expelled a few students who were caught reading books that were written by the New Thinkers.

This example demonstrates why Zhogs-dung's claims have some basis in truth. Zhogs-dung worried that the religious people prevent ordinary Tibetans from being exposed to new ideas. Many monks assume that the New Thinkers talk about "devastation" and "revolution," which are the typical ideas of the Red Guard during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. I even noticed that many young Tibetans who received a modern education in western countries also label Zhogs-dung's ideas reflective of the historical materialism of Maoism. For instance, there was a debate among members of the Tibetan Diaspora, and many of them criticize Zhogs-dung's ideas. In April 2010 a Tibetan named Klog-mkhan-zhig, (or a reader) wrote on the Tibetan Web site Khabrda (or dialogue), "Zhogs-dung and his group promote value of 'self' (actually Zhogs-dung's own view), 'spirits' (spirits of the Chinese Red Guard), and 'truth' (red thought)." ⁸⁷ Another Tibetan named Rgya-nag-nyams-zhib-pa also wrote:

Actually Zhogs-dung talks about a cultural revolution and the way of thinking rather than about a political revolution. In fact, his revolution is a [Tibetan] version of Mao' destroying the old, establishing new culture and new thought. ⁸⁸

One supporter of Zhogs-dung, Mda'-tshan-pa, argued on the same Web site, "Overall, he [Zhogs-dung] should be labeled as a democratic, peacekeeper, freedom fighter, or peaceful revolutionary rather than as a member of the Red Guard." ⁸⁹ A monk, Gcan-'od-zer (2000), from Bla-brang monastery argued that Tibetans should build a golden bridge between monastery monks and school students to learn from each other and exchange ideas for the future development of Tibetan culture. He also criticized many monks for not caring about national peace, cultural development, modern science, or other modern trends. In addition, they even discriminate against and satirize those monks who have long-term visions (pp. 70-71). However, many Tibetans resist Zhogs-dung's new ideas, and only a few are inclined to agree with him.

⁸⁷ Retrieved in September 2010 from: <http://www.khabdha.org/?p=7758#more-7758>

⁸⁸ Retrieved in September 2010 from: <http://www.khabdha.org/?p=7758#more-7758>

⁸⁹ Retrieved in September 2010 from: <http://www.khabdha.org/?p=8202&cpage=1#comment-26306>

3.1 *Mkhan-po Tshul-khrims-lbo-gros*

Mkhan-po Tshul-khrims-lbo-gros and Rme-sprul Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho are two traditional scholars who have defended traditional culture and Buddhism. Both of them are from *Gser rta lba rung sgar*, where many Buddhist scholars have received a traditional education since the 1980s. Germano (1998) described how Tibetans regained their pride from a master who led his student disciples to reconstruct Tibetan values and identity:

He [Mkhan-po 'Jigs-med-phun-tshogs or Mkhan-po 'Jigs-phun] has constellated Tibet's fragmented cultural energy around him, reinvested it in the Tibetan physical and imaginal landscape, directly relinked the contemporary situation with Tibet's past, and thus, in a major way, reconstituted Tibetan identity within the realities of life in the contemporary People's Republic of China, thus reinvigorating Tibetan pride, self-confidence, and sense of purpose. (p. 57)

Both *mkhan pos* were Mkhan-po 'Jigs-phun's key disciples, and they have been devoted to Buddhist teachings at *Gser rta lba rung sgar*, which is founded by Mkhan-po 'Jigs-phun. Buddhist scholars from this monastery have worked to educate ordinary Tibetan herders and farmers into regaining their religious tradition through teaching basic Buddhist practices. These masters or *mkhan pos* not only transmit Buddhist teachings through their mouths, but also they write commentaries of Buddhist doctrines and explanations of good practices. Mkhan-po Tshul-khrims-lbo-gros also actively promotes Tibetan language among young Tibetans by updating Tibetan dictionaries with new technical terms from the outside world.

Mkhan-po Tshul-khrims-lbo-gros is the author of several books about Buddhist teachings. One article from the collections of his works responds to Zhogs-dung's charge. Mkhan-po Tshul-khrims-lbo-gros argued that even people who live in developed countries still have religious beliefs, though new science has overturned some of the ideas of western religions. In general, most people do not claim that religion has become a barrier to economic development. As a result, of advanced technology and the existence of weapons of mass destruction, human beings need to cope with mental problems in order to keep the world safe. Our world can be destroyed many times by weapons, which are a production of modern science and military competition. The spiritual practices among world citizens may help them to pay attention to their behaviors in order to keep our world safe. (Tshul-khrims-lbo-gros, 2006, pp. 261-262).

Tshul-khrims-lbo-gros (2006) pointed out that "the goal of Buddhism is to generate temporary benefit and ultimate happiness of all sentient beings" (p. 265). It always teaches the ideas of bringing benefit and happiness to all sentient beings, and it leads the actions of all sentient beings according to this notion. Therefore, it is foolish to argue that religion is only for the monks to be able to achieve high goals, but not for ordinary people.

If a physician prescribes medicine for an ailment, but the patient does not take it, the patient cannot blame the medicine if he or she does not recover. The same logic can be

applied to a religion. It is just as fallacious an argument that Tibet will lose all of its religion and culture if it follows Zhogs-dung's lead and only pursues economic/material development.

Tshul-khrims-lbo-gros argues that Zhogs-dung's ideas are mostly influenced by western ideas and by the schemas of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. His writing, "Tossing and Expelling the Old Schema" (*bag chags dong sprug*), is a good example of this charge because Zhogs-dung saw old practices as negative features and assumed that Tibet cannot catch up to other advanced nations unless it destroys the traditional culture from root to branch (p. 262). In fact, Tibetans still have a strong belief system, and this belief system helps Tibetans to organize their lives when they face difficulties. If Tibetans had not believed in Buddhism, they would have become part of another nation a long time ago. The religious belief is a unique trait of Tibet and its people. Tibetans have an obligation to preserve the dharma teaching.

As Ajia Rinpoche (2010) pointed out, "My main goal – to ensure the continuation of Buddha's teaching – remained constant, [...]" (p. 196). Many Tibetan lamas and monks think the same way and they often hope that all Tibetans have the same goal. Many people believe that religion is the glue that holds Tibetans together and that Tibetans will vanish without their religion. As Kapstein (1998) argued:

[A]nd Tibetan religion, it must be stressed, reinforces the Tibetan sense of identity in part by engendering a shared culture in many areas of life that in postindustrial, secularized societies are no longer often treated as religious. (p. 140)

Unified as one, Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan culture cannot be separated. Tibetan culture will vanish at the same time as the Tibetan Buddhist tradition does. Tibetan Buddhism has never harmed Tibetans, and it has encouraged Tibetans' spiritual life. The religion has also enriched Tibetan culture and knowledge regarding the inner or spiritual world. It is obvious to us that traditional culture is bound up with and directly associated with the process of basic social, economic, and ecological change. Traditional culture unites the hearts of Tibetans, and the dynamic power of traditional culture is immeasurable and inestimable. Culture is not a static phenomenon, and it is changing all the time and all over the world. Tibetans believe in impermanence, and they accept that their religion and cultural traditions are also impermanent.

3.2 Rme-sprul Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho

Rme-sprul Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho is also a *mkhan po* or master from the *Gser rta lba rung sgar*. He published an essay in 2002 in response to a college student who gave him a copy of Zhogs-dung's first book and asked him to write a response to the book.

Rme-sprul thought that a nation should inject new information into its culture and reform its culture in order to avoid being behind other nations and being overlooked by

history. Rme-sprul assumed that the gap between the new knowledge and traditional culture can be filled by the use of technology. He noted that it is wrong to assume that Tibet's religion and traditional culture is the root of its backwardness and that both must be destroyed in order for Tibet to move forward. He believed that young Tibetans follow this notion blindly. In his essay, he carefully examined the notion of the New Thinkers and concluded that the New Thinkers just continued an old quarrel of Nihilist Charvakas⁹⁰ (philosophical sect of ancient India) that the Tibetans call *rgyang 'phen pa*, after comparing the notions of these two groups. The core thought of these groups is that they only accept conceptual knowledge and focus on material things and enjoyment of this life. Rme-sprul thought it would be perfectly fine if he renamed the New Thinkers as the New Nihilists.

Rme-sprul philosophically analyzed how the New Thinkers misunderstand and use the term "self" because they want to reject the Buddhist conception of no self. For instance, Rme-sprul pointed out that the New Thinkers mistakenly believe that the self⁹¹ is the creator of the container (universe) and its contents (all sentient beings). He argued that all innovations are products of human collective labor and that intelligence rather than products of the poisonous self. Rme-sprul also believed that it is wrong to be selfish in the world because all ordinary people in our world have strong feelings of self, and this self-centered desire is an endless problem. We should find a way to limit self-centered desire rather than to encourage selfishness. He argued that Zhogs-dung's story about a son who killed his mother is a good example of wrongdoing and of selfishness. Rme-sprul pointed out that everyone is self-centered and that we all harm others because we are selfish. No one really understands self, but no one has ever lost the feeling of self.

Rme-sprul assumed that Zhogs-dung's argument is just like a shot in dark because the New Thinker did not find the right target. He suggested, on the one hand, that it is useless to attack traditional culture because Tibetans cannot have a unique culture without their traditional culture. On the other hand, Tibetans will benefit from modern science if they have the opportunity to import the new theories and learn them in the Tibetan language.

However, it is not wise to destroy what already exists in order to develop what Tibetan society lacks. To a certain extent, the New Thinkers may accelerate Tibet's decline, rather than its rise. Therefore, many Tibetans argue that what the New Thinkers are seeking to do is dangerous and against the principles of desirable development practices. The successful experiences of other nations show us that one should add new knowledge into their own religions and cultures in order to achieve development. Otherwise, the notion of destroying the base or foundation of a culture or nation in order to move forward is tantamount to suicide.

⁹⁰ Indian rishis holding a worldly doctrine denying later lives and fruition of karma.

⁹¹ The New Thinkers like to use the term "existing self," and I think the term might mean individualism to them.

At the time of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, people used the phrase “destroy the four old things,” but Zhogs-dung changed it into “tossing four schemas.” There is no new tradition here, but Zhogs-dung has just tried to resell the principles of the Chinese Cultural Revolution to people who were not paying attention. The New Thinkers explained that they are not going to destroy the forms or constructions of Tibetan religion as the Chinese Cultural Revolution did.

Rme-sprul believed the damage to Tibetan culture attempted by the New Thinkers will be 100 times worse than what the Chinese Cultural Revolution did to it because the New Thinkers yearn to pull out the root of Tibetan culture such as their faith, unique consciousness, and personality.

Zhogs-dung (2008) explained that the New Thinkers are not advocating that Tibetans destroy all religion and cultural traditions. Rather, Zhogs-dung argued that Tibetans need to put religion in its proper place (pp. 46-58). Rme-sprul argued that this explanation has the clamor of an unfaithful woman. He cited a story from Buddhist doctrine to illuminate the contradiction of Zhogs-dung’s writing. A long ago a man saw his wife with another man in the bed, and he asked her why she cheated on him. She denied his accusation and pretended that nothing happened. The husband told her that his eyes saw her unfaithful action, and he asked why she made the pretence of ignorance. She answered that he should believe the words of his sweetheart rather than his own eyes. The husband had nothing to say, and she won the argument (Rme-sprul, 2002, p. 97). Rme-sprul argued that Zhogs-dung believed what he does because he believed that Tibetan traditional culture brought calamity to the nation and that it is urgent to destroy the old tradition, or old schemas, including religion, from root to branch.

Rme-sprul analyzed the same examples in different ways to demonstrate that Zhogs-dung’s argument is no longer valid. Rme-sprul cited as an example the fact that more and more Chinese people are religious now that China’s economy is improving. China’s economic development was in big trouble during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and people were not permitted to practice religion during that time. Rme-sprul observed that many developed nations still keep their religions, and many countries have populations that practice many different religions. Therefore, Zhogs-dung cannot see the value of religion in the same way that a blind man cannot see a chest of gold coins sitting in front of him.

How did we end up in the current endangered state? Zhogs-dung often accused Buddhist schemas. Rme-sprul argued that Tibet’s political, economical, cultural, and social discourses were not developed in their own course, but were forced by outside processes. The New Thinkers did not complain about outside pressure. Therefore, it is strange that the New Thinkers blame the Tibetans themselves for wanting to continue to preserve Tibetan religion and cultural traditions.

An analogy can be made to a playground bully. The bully looks tough and mean on the outside, but he is afraid on the inside. A bully becomes weaker when he meets

someone who can stand up to him. A person who is being bullied is likely to become a bully himself if he/she encounters a weaker person. Rme-sprul concluded that these sentences from Zhogs-dung are good mirrors for the Tibetan New Thinkers. (pp. 96-107). In fact, the New Thinkers often ignore the current sociopolitical context and try to analyze Tibetan society through the lens of the past. The New Thinkers have not yet found their real target, but they imagine that Tibet is still ruled by a group of religious people. They have not made an effort to obtain a clear picture of Tibet's current situation the Tibetans' true mental and emotional state. They take a few of their urban friends in order to make assumptions about Tibetan society. They talk about the people and religion of Tibet from their own imaginations and nothing more.

As Rme-sprul (2002) wrote:

It is said that the real meaning of Buddhism is the notion of interdependence and the action of nonviolence. Your [the New Thinkers] wish would have been fulfilled if you can provide evidence to show this (Buddhist) harm to social development and people's lives. (p. 108)

Rme-sprul (2002) has also criticized the New Thinkers' views on karmic philosophy, which, to some extent, directs the behaviors of Tibetans. The New Thinkers assume that this karmic idea leads Tibetans to become lazy and stupid when they face real life crises. The Buddhist karmic notion is often held responsible for Tibet's supposed backwardness, but Rme-sprul believed the New Thinkers did not understand the concept of karma. They are, therefore, not qualified to criticize it. He (2002) argued:

According to Buddhist tradition, it supposes that karma is divided into two karmas such as past karma and present karma. It emphasizes the latter to assist one in making one's choices. A good action or behavior will receive a good result; a negative action or behavior will receive a negative consequence. This is the core of Buddhist education, which requires that one should be one hundred percent responsible for one's own action and which encourages one to direct one's own destiny by oneself. (p. 108)

Fazel and Yong (1988) pointed out that, "[A] controversy exists in the literature about the efficiency with which textual dogmas such as karma trickle down to the level of everyday life and influence day-to-day behavior" (p. 240).

This statement implies that karmic philosophy or the notion of cause and affect not only has a positive influence on oneself. It is also a key technique to transforming people's hearts in the right direction for building a peaceful society. The New Thinkers often misuse this term (karma) and its notion. Many Tibetans and non-Tibetans are quick to blame the karmic philosophy as an explanation for Tibet's poverty. It is also not an exaggeration to say that most Tibetans do not really understand what karma is. Even educated Tibetans do not have a complete understanding of karmic philosophy.

China's recent move to capitalism has been more powerful psychologically than any religious dogma could ever be. Capitalism poses a very real threat to traditional Tibetan culture and to Tibetan identity. It is right to struggle for empowerment with one's last

breath as the New Thinkers have done. Should capitalism cause the extinction of traditional Tibetan culture, the question is what comes next? Can Tibetans, as an ethnic group, survive, without their traditional culture? If so, what should Tibetans become next? If not, what do Tibetans and others need to do to preserve the elements of traditional culture that need to be preserved. Does the source of Tibet's cultural evolution need to come from within Tibetans' hearts, or will outside influences be required to assist? What kind of leaders will a more modern Tibet produce?

Many Tibetans try to answer these questions in different ways. For this reason, Rme-sprul praised the motivation of the New Thinkers and proposed that all Tibetans should be unified in their fight for survival. Sherab Dargye (2003) wrote:

If Mr. Zhogs-dung and I have a chance to discuss the fate and culture of Tibet in fear-free circumstances and a relaxed situation, the two of us may have thousands of common ideas. But, it is clear that there is a conflict between our different ways of thinking about Tibet's future or fate and seeking for the root of decline. (p. 3)

If Tibet's goal is simply to catch up with other nations, the debate should be seen as a discussion for improvement rather than as an effort to divide different groups of Tibetans. In some cases, monks lead the debate in another direction and distort the nature of the debate. Gcod-pa-klu-rgyal argued, "According to others' work or my conversations with others, some older scholars believe that he [Zhogs-dung] is purely honest. Of course, many people disagree with him" (Interview, October 2010).

4.0 Buddhism and Science

Many Tibetan scholars have ignored the New Thinkers' efforts because they also believe that the New Thinkers may fight for the sake of Tibet though they may have chosen a method that will ultimately destroy Tibet's traditional culture and religion. However, Buddhists or monks who are interested in protecting Tibet's religion react to Zhogs-dung's charge and emphasize the beneficial function and important role of Buddhism. Monks have also provided many quotations from western and Chinese scientists to show that Buddhist philosophy is similar to modern science and that there is no conflict between Tibetan religion and modern science. They notice that Buddhists mostly focus on the inner world or human minds, but modern scientists generally concentrate on the outer world or material world. Tibetan Buddhism may generate less material luxury, but it does generate a type of spiritual wealth for Tibetans and others. Famous Tibetan religious practitioners have long supported what westerners refer to as separation of church and state. This sentiment is actually in agreement with Zhogs-dung's views that the clergy in Tibet has too much influence in Tibetans' political lives. On this point, Zhogs-dung's ideas about different paths religious and lay people must take in order to

develop the material world is not hurting the core of Tibetan religion. In fact, Zhogs-dung seems to be in agreement with most Tibetans on this matter.

Zhogs-dung has totally advocated the idea of the separation of religion and the pursuit of worldly things, and he has completely denied that there is a possible connection between Buddhism and science. The New Thinkers try to distinguish between religion and science using the doctrines of western scholars in order to refuse other Tibetan scholars' assumptions that there is a close relationship between modern science and Buddhism.

Zhogs-dung has even created a formula that demonstrates the difference between religion and modern science. He (2008) wrote, "Science: get suspicious [or have doubt] + evaluate = relative truth. [We] can write this way about Religion: faith + [spiritual] practice = Buddha [or enlightenment]" (p. 20). Zhogs-dung tried to prove his old argument that religion is based on faith, and that faith leads people to become unwise because faith is a belief without examination. In reality, the Buddha even told his followers that his teachings should be examined and tested rather than believed in without question⁹². This warning from the Buddha himself defeats Zhogs-dung's charge. Gcan-'od-zer (2000) argued:

According to the theory of Buddhism, all knowledge can be elaborated on three parts: ground/base, path and fruition/achievement (*gzhi, lam, 'bras*). Buddhism is a theory of the outside world when we analyze the material world, and it is a theory of the internal world when we analyze the universe or living beings. (p. 82)

This author also pointed out the difference between Buddhist philosophy and modern science, though he thinks that the investigated object of science and Buddhism is the same (material world and spiritual world). He (2000) wrote:

The inquiry method of Buddhism is to focus on mind and methodology to determine valid knowledge with reason and thought, but science investigates things with tools, chemistry, and materials. So, science and Buddhism use different methods. (p. 82)

I redesigned Zhogs-dung's formula in a different manner according my own knowledge of science, Buddhism and religion: science: hypothesis/question (mainly about the material world) – methods/investigation – findings/conclusion; and Buddhism: ground/goal/hypothesis (mainly about spiritual world) – path/practice/inquiry – realization/enlightenment, and religion: faith – pray – salvation. As a monk, Gcan-'od-zer, also distinguished Buddhism from religion because he believed that Buddhism is a philosophy, but not a religion (2000, p. 78).

⁹² Bhikshus and learned ones,
Just as gold is burnt, cut and rubbed,
Examine well (or carefully) my speech.
And then accept (it), not otherwise, for respect's sake.

I was told that many Japanese scholars have the same point of view. The reason is that Buddhism does not accept the notion of God's creation and salvation. Buddha himself became awakened as a lay person through his devoted practices and rich experience of meditation. However, the core of science is predictable, and it is a repeatable and testable process. It relies on its methodology to draw conclusions about a phenomenon or experiment. Thus, Buddhism is also predictable, and it relies on various methods of practices. It is a technique for setting up a mental experiment, and improving the function of the mind. Buddhists reject any kind of creator of humans and the universe, and they believe that men and women have capacities to liberate themselves through correct methods or practices.

However, it seems that the New Thinkers often forget that Tibetan Buddhism has a well-developed tradition of logic, and it is not critical of the achievements of modern science. Members of the clergy are excited about every convenience brought by science. They not only accept the products of scientific research, but they also agree with the research methodology of science because Buddhists pursue many of the same goals that science does.

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama wrote a book in 2005 that examined the convergence of science and spirituality. In his book, *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality*, he discussed his own passion for science. He also gave an extensive discussion of his efforts to create science curricula in Tibetan refugee schools in Dharamsala, India. The Dalai Lama is also a regular participant in the biannual Mind and Life Conferences, during which the intersection between science and spirituality is examined in depth.

One conflict between science and Buddhism is that Buddhism focuses on the mind, while modern science has many branches that focus on the material world, with much less emphasis on things psychological or spiritual. The different emphases have led to different results, and people tend to accept only the results they can see. It is easy for people to become dependent on the material comforts that have been made available to humans through science. However, we must also remember that the mind has also been the object of study of scientists and the religious leaders of all the world's major religions. Whatever Tibet's future turns out to be, it will have to incorporate elements of both worlds.

5.0 Summary

Young Tibetan intellectuals have seen a new world order since China opened its doors to the outside world. Though the Internet in China is still heavily censored, the Chinese and the Tibetans living there have had access to information that they have not had access to previously. This influx of information has caused Tibetans to reexamine their own traditional culture and ideas. New thinking in Tibet, at least in Amdo, began with college

students from the Northwest University of Nationalities in Lanzhou, which is a center of Chinese industry and the capital of Gansu Province. While it is difficult to arrive at an exact date for the emergence of the New Thinkers, it seems that a few young scholars' works in 1990s marked the dawn of a new era in Tibet's thought. This author recognizes the declaration of the movement as 1999, when Zhogs-dung's first article appeared in *Qinghai Daily in Tibetan*.

The New Thinkers trace themselves back to the mid-20th century when Dge-'dun-chos-'phel saw the outside world and brought new information from India to Tibet before his death in 1951. Many Tibetans did not read his works until the 1990s when a large number of Tibetan books and journals began to be published. In the 1980s, another Tibetan writer, Don-grub-rgyal, acquired new ideas from China and introduced freestyle poetry to Tibet. These two writers are often given credit for developing contemporary Tibetan literature, but neither one of them attempted to destroy traditional Tibetan culture.

I believe the Tibetan New Thinkers emerged in 1990 with the publication of Mkhar-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis' article, "Briefly Touching on Tibetan Traditional Culture and Contemporary Concepts," though the work was largely ignored. Zhogs-dung's two most influential and controversial articles repeated the main points of Mkhar-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis' article, but these two articles focused on the destruction of Tibetan traditional culture. The large amount of leisure time afforded Tibetan intellectuals in the Chinese restaurants and teahouses provided Tibetans with a chance to discuss different issues and publish their ideas. The New Thinkers gradually formed a group and a unified position in the 1990s, influenced by past and present Chinese masters from different political and cultural movements. They carried out the task of changing Tibetan society with new ideas to counter the ideologies of Chinese politics (implicitly) and Tibetan religion (explicitly). Their *ideoscapes* are derived from the western world and particularly from Enlightenment thinkers in the 18th century. As Appadurai observed:

These ideoscapes are composed of elements of the Enlightenment worldview, which consists of a chain of ideas, terms, and images, including freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, representation, and the master term democracy. The master narrative of the Enlightenment (and its many variants in Britain, France, and the United States) was constructed with a certain internal logic and presupposed a certain relationship between reading, representation, and the public sphere. (pp. 589-590)

The Tibetan variant of the enlightenment narrative is similar to that of the Chinese narrative because the New Thinkers do not have the ability to read and interpret the original sources of enlightenment. Their exposure to the written materials that emerged from the Enlightenment, or that were written about the Enlightenment come from Chinese translations of those materials. For this reason, they mainly follow Chinese masters of the May Fourth Movement and a few contemporary activists. The Chinese May Fourth Movement began with the slogan of "overthrowing the temple of Confucius." The New Thinkers followed suit by promoting the idea of "overthrowing the

Buddhist authority” in Tibet at the end of the 20th century. The core of their tasks probably is to translate key words of the Enlightenment into Tibetan from Chinese and represent the Enlightenment worldview to Tibetans through publications and lectures. To date, they have published more than 15 books and have given several lectures at universities to advocate their worldview. Their works show destructive mentalities, which are heavily influenced by Mao Zedong’s ideas and his great creation, the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

The New Thinkers’ modern education started from the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and its shadow has never disappeared from their hearts. Sometimes people felt that their views were a new version of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Their ideas just appeared on the stage, and they were struggling to cope with Tibet’s Diaspora with these ideas. The New Thinkers have attempted to organize a new Tibetan culture around a few key ideas that they have gathered from Chinese works. It has been challenging for the New Thinkers to find equivalent terms in Tibetan to express these largely Chinese ideas. Another challenge the New Thinkers have is figuring out how to represent their ideas in light of the current Tibetan cultural and social situation and Chinese sociopolitical control in Tibet. These challenges created certain debate between the New Thinkers and other Tibetan scholars, and they have caused political change. The New Thinkers do not advocate sinicization politically and indigenization culturally, but they intend to accept globalization both politically and culturally. The New Thinkers have an enterprising mentality, and they complain about the traditional cultural mentality, which focuses on kindness and compassion rather than on selfishness/individualism and competition. Therefore, the New Thinkers do not have less attachment to traditional culture and they advocate eliminating it entirely in order to set up universal values and culture in Tibet.

If I could use one phrase to summarize what the New Thinkers are attempting to do, it would be “cultural suicide.” People have been discussing the issues of “cultural genocide” or “ethnic cleansing” when they refer to attempts to eliminate various cultural traditions or ethnic groups. In fact, the term cultural genocide is used often by exile Tibetans and by non-Tibetans when they talk about events in Tibet. In this context, it is only natural for the oppressed groups to attempt to fight this process. The New Thinkers appear to have adopted an “if we can’t beat them, join them” attitude. In that vein, they have adopted the mantras “survival of the fittest” and “those who fall behind will be beaten.” Sharks in the ocean seek opportunities to eat smaller fish in the same way that larger political powers seek to swallow up smaller groups. For the larger political powers, this mechanism is called globalization. The larger and more powerful members of the “global village” rule over their neighbors and use economic development as a lure and as a weapon at the same time. Some members of the global village, driven by their desires for material gain pursue their fellows to the point of extinction, in much the same way poachers hunt endangered species. The New Thinkers are a good example of these

opportunistic entities who will receive rewards from their strong neighbors if they destroy their own culture without external coercion.

One question we have to ask is whether the New Thinkers are doing this consciously. Are they doing it for their own benefit, or do they have good intentions, with the unfortunate result of also having negative consequences? According to the New Thinkers' writings, we can predict the result of "cultural suicide." To them, it is an intentional to carry out a movement similar to the Chinese New Cultural Movement and/or Cultural Revolution in Tibet in order to remove the elements of traditional culture and catch up with modern nations such as the United States. The New Thinkers dream of the Americanization of Tibet, and they are willing to go to any lengths to accomplish this if they have an ability to let western ideas replace Tibetan ones. The New Thinkers ignore the emotional and psychological damage caused to many Tibetans during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, but they try to convince Tibetans that another revolution will be good for them.

The New Thinkers also fail to acknowledge that China's economic progress over the last 40 years often ignored the spiritual needs of its people. The Chinese are becoming more religious, and they often turn to Buddhism and Christianity. The New Thinkers need to take this fact under consideration as they do their work.

Buddhism has become the identity and the symbol of Tibet since the 9th century. The majority of Tibetans follow this religion, and most of them believe in the concept of cause and effect (karma). There is no other objective or insight that can represent the identity of Tibet, and that is why so many Tibetans believe that protecting their unique culture is the same as protecting their identity. Goldstein (1998) mentioned that, "Tibetans saw religion as a symbol of their country's identity and of the superiority of their civilization" (p. 15). My fieldwork shows that Tibetans are the guardians of Buddhism or religion, and they actually want to be who they used to be for many centuries. Tibetans believe that only their religion can bring the entire nation together and unify it as one.

The New Thinkers appear to want to destroy Tibetans' collective cohesion, which is derived from their religious beliefs, and this cohesion in Tibet continues to be an eyesore for China. Zhogs-dung's colleagues and China's elites strategically view Buddhism in Tibet as a foe, and they are taking actions to get rid of it in different ways. The New Thinkers were able to cause a cultural shift among Tibetans, and many assumed that they were abnormal and radical, even accused them of being revolutionaries or Red Guards, even Chinese moles. Sgren-po (2008) claimed that:

Every single Tibetan sets great store by Zhogs-dung. Some say Zhogs-dung is an *lta log* or an apostate, and others say he is a crazy man or a spy. There is no fear of that [accusation]. Many Tibetan intellectuals have also received the labels of apostate, crazy man, and spy. (p. 41)

There are many reasons why Tibetan culture has faced, and is facing, challenges from inside and outside. Monks or religious leaders have become competitors with the Tibetan revolutionaries of today, and they were exploitators and enemies of people during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Some monks have been becoming close friends with their adversaries just as they did during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Tibetans have been able to cope with pressures from outside for many decades, and there is a little hope of preserving traditional Tibetan culture. How to deal with internal challenges is a new and uncertain question for Tibetans. Is there a way to save Tibetan culture without Buddhism? Do Tibetans really need a symbol in order to unify themselves? What will happen if Tibetans lose their culture? Is it more important for Tibetans to have a rich spiritual culture or a secular culture? These questions merit further investigation, but they are beyond the scope of this research.

Monks and other religious people in Tibet have struggled to answer these questions. They are worried about their own positions in Tibetan society, and they also predict that there will be no Tibet without the Buddhist tradition. They even argue that there are many similarities between modern science and Buddhist philosophy. That means Tibetan culture, which is dominated by Buddhist philosophy, is not the backward culture that the Chinese propagandists and the New Thinkers claim it is. The monks of Tibet are confident that their religion may generate hope for peace and happiness for all people on Earth. It is fair to say that Buddhism is one kind of inner science, which is at least an independent discipline of science according to our limited knowledge of the inner spirit or mind of human beings. Buddha certainly demonstrated that there could be an alternative and potential energy of the human mind, which we have been unable to discover. Human beings may ultimately understand the nature of mind if they examine and practice the Buddha's direction and methods for enlightenment. It is not enough to just talk about his teachings; it is important to practice them as well.

Two year ago, Zhogs-dung, followed the footsteps of his Chinese revolutionary masters and changed his tactics from attacking Tibet's traditional culture to criticizing China's politics. This change of attitude resulted in his arrest and earned him a lot of respect from Tibetans and others. Now many Tibetans respect him as a hero of the nation, and they anxiously watch his situation. His release, in light of the long prison sentences given to other Tibetan writers (who also followed Zhogs-dung) raise questions about his lucky karma. This remains a mystery, and this research does not conduct such an investigation. What concerns many Tibetans at the moment is finding the right way to preserve traditional culture and improve Tibetans' living conditions. Is it possible to accomplish both at the same time?

Education is one of the only options that Tibetans have for improving their living conditions and preserving their traditional culture. The curriculum must maintain a balance between modern science and traditional Buddhist teachings. That is not to say that schools should model themselves after monasteries or that Buddhist teachings should

dominate the curriculum of schools. It is true in Tibet that the Buddhist philosophy can be chosen to guide the morality of young people. If Tibetans want to make progress in the 21st century, they should not only gain new knowledge and skills, but they should also understand their Buddhism-dominated culture. There would be beneficial for Tibetans to use new knowledge to survey and examine their religious doctrines for a deeper understanding rather than simply a worship of Buddhist transcripts. It is obvious that new knowledge and skills are indispensable to making a better living in the 21st century. Today, morality has become a big problem for Tibetans since the expansion of capitalism has reached the roof of the world, and Tibetans believe they need to regain their “good heart,” which they inherited from their ancestors centuries ago.

The claims of Zhogs-dung and a few Tibetan scholars are not true. Tibetans, like most people everywhere, want to accumulate wealth. This is even true of many lamas. More and more people are becoming servants of money. It is too dangerous to coach young people to take things from others and to ignore the suffering of others. We all know the basic norm of capitalism is that one man’s gain is another man’s loss. Therefore, it is important to realize that moral education is necessary, and Buddhist philosophy can be used to create a balance between greed and creating happy lives for Tibetans. Of course, most religious education can take place at home. This would leave time and resources available for schools to instruct students in the knowledge and skills needed to survive in the workplace.

It is commonly understood that people who have material wealth are not necessarily happy if they do not also feel spiritually grounded. In some cases, Tibetans have already benefited from modern education, but the problem is how to keep its national identity and traditional culture. This problem is only solved by family education, and it could be easy if parents understand that Buddhism is perfect for moral education and not only as a religion or philosophy. The monasteries could play major roles in serving Tibetan society, but they need to implement new steps in order to accommodate Tibet’s current situation. They may be able to learn lessons from Japanese Buddhist reform writings as can be seen in this suggestion by Tsu (1924):

The response of any religion to the impact of a new age usually takes the course of internal reformation, the development of [a] new apologetic and the formulation of a social creed, in the order named. Self-preservation requires that it spread its energy first in adjusting its own organized life to the new social environment in which it must live and from which it must derive its nourishment. Then comes the intellectual task of restating or justifying its doctrines in terms of the new ideas that sway the thinking of the age, and finally it develops a social gospel, that is to say, it becomes aware of its social mission. (p. 35)

For many centuries, monks directed education in Tibet, and monasteries were the centers of learning in the same way that the Christian monasteries of Europe were in the Middle Ages. It is not surprising that Buddhism continues to be strongly associated with education in Tibet. In traditional Tibetan society, ordinary people sent their children to

monasteries so that they could receive an education and reach the goal of enlightenment (though only a few actually achieve this). The locals only worship images and doctrines of Buddha in monasteries and at home in order to receive protection from misfortune and undesirable occurrences in the future as well as in the present. The majority of ordinary Tibetans are still illiterate and cannot accurately understand Buddha's message. Thus, their practice of Buddhism is based on faith, the recitation of mantras, prostrations, and circumambulations. These forms of practice may be necessary if people are unable to read and understand the true meaning of Buddhist canons. Naturally, the core of traditional culture was built on the belief in Buddha as a powerful protector but not as a great teacher. This belief expands to the belief system of deities and religious rituals, and people become slaves to religion but not disciples of Buddha.

Today the direction of education has changed radically because most children go to schools rather than to monasteries in order to gain the skills and education they need to become successful in the working world. Some educated people believe there is a conflict between modern values and Buddhist philosophy, and they began to question the role of Buddhism as a religion in contemporary Tibet. All this, however, is not bizarre in the modern age of secularism as the expansion of sinicized Marxism overwhelms Tibetan education from primary schools to universities.

During the last two decades, there has been a movement away from religion in Tibet that has been led by Zhogs-dung and his colleagues. Buddhism, because of its obvious position, bears the brunt of this attack. It is generally understood that this movement is inspired from the outside and forms a part of the Communist revolutionary propaganda. However, most monasteries and lay Tibetans are disappointed by the movement, and are strongly unified together in their opposition to the new thinkers.

This movement has become the spiritual incentive to unite Tibetans together to protect their culture and enlarge the national symbol of Buddhism. Meanwhile the turmoil of thought also pushes the wave of Tibetan nationalism high among religious refugees and Tibetan political and educational progressives. The explosion of religious refugees' anger was caused by pressure from both the current political circumstance and by the New Thinkers' attempts to change the minds of ordinary Tibetans. It is true that the voice of revolutionaries represents a kind of secular view of Tibetan nationalism and promotes the fantasies of universal values in Tibet in its language.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the combination of nationalism and modern values has attracted many contemporary youths to write radical articles, which have appeared on self-run magazines in Amdo and which have caused some authors to be arrested. This shows that the New Thinkers' criticism has been aimed at both Tibet's traditional culture and on the past and present policies of China's government. The fantasies of universal values and nostalgia for the spirits of the Tibetan Imperial Period are the fuel for the New Thinkers' efforts. If the New Thinkers have a chance to weaken traditional values, and a non-Tibetan environment becomes more attractive for young

people, the New Thinkers' ideas could be widely accepted, and individuals could also be easily motivated to reject traditional culture.

In Tibetan society, if someone failed to respect religion, he or she would be marginalized and lose his or her support circle (families, friends, etc.). It is taboo to attack religion and its practitioners. Usually Tibetans assume that religion is positive and that it is a sin to look upon religion in a negative way. This situation in Tibet is still pretty common, and most Tibetans are critical of those who attack religion. Zhogs-dung and his colleagues have violated this norm, and they are often labeled demons (or evil spirits), traitors, and ignorant as a result.

Many people assumed that the New Thinkers are similar to the famous Red Guard of the Chinese Cultural Revolution because the Tibetan revolutionaries have attacked religion and traditional culture. The radical and extreme revolutionary thinking of the New Thinkers shocked many Tibetans and reminded them that it is possible to set up another Cultural Revolution in Tibet. People's minds can be guided by any kind of ideology, but old ideas are not washed away as easily as people think. In particular, the fixed minds of people cannot be changed by new intellectuals, even though new ideas spread quickly in some political environments. Tibetans must take care that these new ideas do not become toxic. However, the dark shadow of the Chinese Cultural Revolution cannot be easily removed from Tibetans' minds, and so they do not trust ideas that attack religion.

Will Tibetans want to have another cultural revolution? The answer is that Tibetans cannot afford to destroy what remains of their culture. They have understood one thing with their mingled feelings of joy and sorrow. They all understand that Tibetans should let go of their regionalist mentality and become unified as one nation under the flag of a national religion to fight for a brighter future. That means Tibetan nationalism needs to rise above the oppressive/Chinese political environment and the character of the modern world.

Can religion and/or nationalism really save Tibet? It is important to ask these questions, but it is also impossible to predict the future. How do we deal with modernity? This is a challenging question for all people, not just Tibetans. There is no one right answer because no one is right all the time, and there is not one truth but many truths. I cannot predict the day when the new ideas will flourish, and tradition will fade away in Tibet. However, urbanization, transportation, immigration, diverse ideas, technology, new interactions, instant information, markets, institutes, socialism, and capitalism create confusion and redirect Tibetans and other groups in the world. We really do not have any idea where we will end up and what will happen to us in the future. However, as Giddens (1999) pointed out, "It is entirely rational to recognize that traditions are needed in society. [...] traditions are needed, and will always persist, because they give continuity and form to life" (pp. 44-45).

It is obvious that the conflict between science and religion, rational and irrational, modernity and tradition, liberal and conservative has become a critical debate among scholars from many nations. It is also true that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Some scholars believe that contradiction is the engine of social development. Some may also argue that there is no conflict because modernity, by definition, is redesigned or updated tradition. It is hard to judge which is right and which is wrong. In the Tibetan case, some liberal scholars are struggling to search for modernity, while other conservatives work hard to protect their old traditions and culture.

In Part III, I gave a brief background on the New Thinkers, and analyzed their views, along with those of their supporters and opponents in Amdo. That discussion did not consider the New Thinkers in Central Tibet and Khams. It is important to examine these two groups, but I did not have the resources or time to examine New Thinkers in these areas. Interviewing New Thinkers in these two regions of Tibet, along with studying their works, will present a more holistic picture of the New Thinkers as a group throughout Tibet. In this study, I have done my best to give a fair representation of the New Thinkers I studied and interviewed for this project. I apologize in advance if I have not given an accurate or complete description of them.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the essence of Tibetan traditional culture can be found in Amdo although the society has been transformed and its consequences have affected local life. Tibetans try to find alternatives to developing their communities and preserving their culture even though they have no political power. They are struggling to become modern, but they also desire to preserve their tradition. This research contributes to modern Tibetan studies and cultural studies in general. Part III of this dissertation is innovative and presents an important discussion of new belief systems and ideology in Tibet.

Tibetans and many researchers are familiar with the Tibetan term Amdo, though nobody can explain the origin of the term. The general population and the popular language suggest that the term Amdo is a merging of the Tibetan letter *a-* and Tibetan word *Mdo*. There is no hidden meaning for the Tibetan letter *a-*.

Amdo is located in eastern region of the Tibetan plateau and is one of the three traditional provinces (*chol kha gsum*) of Tibet. It is also referred to as Mdosmad. Tibetans from Amdo call themselves as Amdobas (phonetic: Amdo wa) and they speak *Amdo skad*, one of the three Tibetan dialects (*Dbusgtsang skad*, *Khams skad*, *Amdo skad*). *Chol kha gsum* forms a coherent historic, linguistic, cultural, and ethnic entity and has the multiple attribute of nationhood.

Amdobas often claim to be descendants of Tibetan soldiers or warriors who were sent to defend the frontiers and to settle down in on borders of China and Tibet since the 7th century. The Tibetan people and their culture dominated Amdo for many centuries though the region has been fully or partially controlled, by different political powers. For example, after the disintegration of the Tibetan empire in the 9th century, Amdo was divided among local chieftains, but its cultural ties with Central Tibet continue until now.

The Mongol Empire (Yuan Dynasty 1271-1368) controlled the region of Amdo in the 13th century. Mongols lost their dominant power in Amdo during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912). Later on, small local chieftains and their followers ruled Amdo. In 1928, Qinghai Province was founded by the Republic of China and in the 1930s, and the Muslim warlord Ma Bufang (1903-1975) conquered the northeastern part of Amdo. Many Tibetan-speaking Muslims emerged in Amdo during his reign. The People's Liberation Army defeated Ma's forces in 1949 and the Communists gained control in Amdo.

Today, Amdo is divided into many administrative divisions within the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan in the People's Republic of China. Qinghai Province has six Tibetan autonomous prefectures, Gansu Province has one Tibetan autonomous prefecture, one Tibetan autonomous county, and two Tibetan autonomous townships.

Sichuan Province has two Tibetan Autonomous prefectures, and some parts of the Rngaba Prefecture are inhabited by Amdobas. Overall, there are fewer Tibetans than Han Chinese in Amdo; Han Chinese mostly live in towns and cities while Tibetans, along with their traditional language and culture live in the rural areas.

From 2012 on, the Chinese authorities started requiring Tibetan pupils to study their normal school curriculum in Chinese (Mandarin). Thousands of middle and high school students have protested this new policy. In the name of preserving Tibetan language, Tibetans have begun a language movement called “pure Tibetan language” (Tibetan: *bod skad gtsang ma*), or “speaking pure mother tongue” (Tibetan: *pha skad gtsang ma bzhad pa*) to promote their language in various ways. For example, many new Tibetans dictionaries for modern terms have been published, and people are required to speak proper Tibetan language without mixing in Mandarin terms. There are many heated face-to-face debates and wonderful discussions online about preserving the Tibetan language. Tibetan pupils and villagers even made rules that levy fines on Tibetans who use Chinese terms when they talk to each other. The purpose of these actions is to prevent instruction of Mandarin in Tibet. Few people pay attention to Tibetan kinship terms, which are based on ancient Tibetan language and are misused by many Tibetans. My analysis and research of Tibetan kinship terms will inform Amdobas that it is important to use proper kinship terms to address and refer to their kin and affinities. The reason why Amdobas are using inconsistent kinship terms is not clear, but educating Tibetans about them may show the arbitrariness of a language and show that one sign may have various meanings or many signs indicate one meaning. For example, *A-zhang* is mother’s brother and *a-zhang tshang* means the bride giver or givers when it comes to marriage. Describing a relationship in this way may mean that a mother’s brother may have the right to make a decision for his sister’s children’s marriage.

Arranged marriage was common and is still popular among nomads and peasants in Amdo, though nowadays love plays major role in the marriages of younger generations of Tibetans. Families continue to be reluctant to accept a bride if the parents on both sides have not given permission for the marriage. Tibetan men can steal or kidnap a bride, but a go-between must still be sent to negotiate a marriage. Even if a bride has been kidnapped, the woman’s parents or kinship group must approve the marriage.

In general, Amdobas assert that, from beginning to the end, there are 18 steps or rituals involved in Tibetan marriage (*gnyen gyi srid pa bco brgyad*). Today, Amdobas skip most parts of those rituals and follow only a few of those steps, but they also began to borrow Chinese elements, such as offering cash. Recently, more and more Tibetans present marriage gifts and the brideprice in cash rather than in animals and/or clothing. It seems that the amount of the brideprice is increasing because many village girls go to school now. Having been educated about how others live when getting married, they are no longer willing to accept the traditional brideprice. As a result, older men are worrying

about their sons who are more likely drop out of school because may no longer be able to find local women to marry.

A few villages in Amdo continue to practice polyandry. These traditions have also been challenged by educated Tibetans and by outside influences. Traditionally, the majority of Amdobas support marriage between one man and one woman. Unlike many western countries, the concept of same-sex marriage has not been accepted in Tibet, as far as my research has been able to tell. The Chinese authorities do not accept gay marriage and require couples to have marriage certificates from government civil offices. The hospitals and clinics in China will not issue a birth certificate for a newborn baby if his or her parents' do not have a marriage certificate because of the Family Plan Policy.

The lives of Tibetan nomads and peasants have been driven by policies of the Chinese government for the last 60 years. Tibetans no longer have many choices about important aspects of their lives. In the 1950s, the Chinese government destroyed the traditional lifestyle of both nomads and peasants with their land reform policies and collectivization. Collectivization was effectively fulfilled with the establishment of the People's Communes in 1958. In the past, the family supported every individual's livelihood, and provided durable reassurance. Families and work units share long-term responsibility for the individual in the People's Communes.

The Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was a total disaster for the Tibetan people and their culture. Tibetans were forced to wear uniforms or western style clothing to show their loyalty to the Chinese authorities and to destroy the Four Old Things (Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas). Tibetans lost their traditions were forced to accept Communism. Even in many Tibetan regions, the government banned teaching the Tibetan language, and all Tibetan pupils were taught in Chinese Mandarin. Government offices and schools were built on the lands that once were used for grazing herds. Many Chinese and Tibetan officials resided in nomadic and agricultural areas to work and introduce a new way of life and ideas to Tibetans. Tibetans accepted the new things and destroyed their own religion and culture. At the same time, the government also attempted to establish farms on the grasslands. This project failed because of the high altitude and infertile soil. The government did not have enough resources to build houses for nomads and therefore allowed them to stay in their traditional tents.

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping launched an economic reform called "Reform and Opening up," which shifted China's economic approach from collective farming to household-based production quotas. The household responsibility system (contract responsibility system or household responsibility system) (Chinese: 家庭联产承包责任制; pinyin: Jiating lianchan chengbao zerenzhi) was first adopted in agriculture in 1981, and families have been responsible for the profits and losses of their production activities. This system gives farmers and nomads a sense of ownership of their lands and domestic animals. Since this reform began, nomads have begun to fence their grasslands with steel mesh and some even built houses in their winter pastures.

Economic reforms have introduced capitalist market principles, permitting entrepreneurs to start up businesses. Chinese and Muslim restaurants and shops have been established in Tibetan towns, and almost everything is available in the markets now. Tibetans have been able to try nontraditional foods in restaurants and have had the opportunity to buy nontraditional items from the new shops. Young Tibetans started feeling that their traditional staple food *rtsam pa* and milk tea are tasteless, and they have begun to consume a lot of vegetables and soft drinks. They also started setting up their own businesses and selling a variety of items ranging from faux fur Tibetan robes to motorcycles. Most men wear western style clothes everywhere in Amdo while women still wear traditional Tibetan clothes. A big portion of their Tibetan robes are not made in their homes, but instead are made in shops in which female Tibetan tailors or dressmakers design and make faux fur Tibetan robes to earn money for their families.

Recently China's Nomad Settlement projects created high unemployment, though some skilled women are running small tailor shops to make a living. However, most of these families still rely on yearly government subsidies, which barely provide enough to feed their families. Inflation has been very high in China in recent years. The nomad settlement projects may end the sustainable lifestyle for the nomads and create enormous social problems for them.

Local governments in Tibetan areas desire more funds from the Central Government and they often initiate projects without involving local people in order to serve their own personal or political agendas. After the settlement project, local authorities launched a "warm house for animal project" in many Tibetan nomadic areas.

The central government may not hear the voices of the local people because of the political system, but good transportation and new technology devices can help the local population to bring more attention to these issues. Peasants do not face relocation issues, but they are busy seeking opportunities to generate good incomes. Many of them have destroyed their traditional wood houses and have built brick houses in order to show their economic success. The peasants' economic situation is worse than that of the nomads. Most of today's peasants earn money in the construction industry or by building roads. Many peasants and nomads also generate income by collecting caterpillar fungus for two months every year.

Most nomads and peasants are primarily concerned about their economic futures, and many Tibetans have taken drastic measures in order to protest government policies. However, nomads and peasants often choose extreme acts to show their devotion to their spiritual leader and distrust to the authority. For example, in 2006, Tibetans burned wild animal furs throughout Tibet because their spiritual leader urged them to protect wild animals. In 2008, Tibetans rose up to challenge the tough policies in Tibetan areas.

Peasants and nomads may not know much about human rights and democracy, but they fight for their rights, their beliefs, and their spiritual leader. Educated Tibetans living in Tibet have been silent on Tibetan issues because they worry about losing their jobs or

being sent to prison. However, from 1999 on, a group of Tibetan New Thinkers from Amdo, led by Zhogs-dung (Bkra-rgyal), have written books that criticize traditional Tibetan culture and religion. This anti-tradition and anti-religion movement challenges traditional Tibetan society, and Tibetans claim the revival of thought of the Chinese Cultural Revolution but nothing else. The Tibetan women's rights movement should also be considered a part of the New Thinkers. A group of Tibetan women began to advocate for women rights in Amdo. I have not explored these activities in my research because of limited time and resources. Further research should be done on the Tibetan women's movement, and it will help others to understand more about what young Tibetans are thinking. At present, two women, Dpa'-mo and 'Jam-dbyangs-skyid, identify themselves as forerunners of the women's movement.

The New Thinkers argue that they are trying to introduce democracy, science, and equality to young Tibetans. These declarations remind us of the slogan of the Chinese May Fourth Movement (1915-1921), which attempted to destroy Chinese traditional culture, and actually succeeded in doing just that on many fronts. The Tibetan New Thinkers never take actions and they do not have many followers because most Tibetans love Buddhist philosophy and are reluctant to give it up. In fact, the New Thinkers are a group of individualists, who try to promote modern business culture, which pushes people to maximize one's profits at any cost. In contrast, Tibetan Buddhism teaches people to love and take care of others first, sometimes at the expense of their own welfare.

Tibetans call the New Thinkers a "perverted group" (Tibetan: *lta log tshogs pa*), and their views are welcomed by only a few young scholars, students and ex-monks. Most Tibetans condemn their attack on religion and traditional culture. The New Thinkers claim the pioneers of awakening Tibetans, who are in a grey area in which sleep and awakening are indistinguishable. Some Tibetans are eager to discard Tibetan culture, while others envision preserving it. History will judge who will lose or who will win, but not who is right or who is wrong. Whoever they are, Tibetan nomads, peasants, scholars, officials, students, monks and nuns, all hope to be able to make their own choices for their own futures.

APPENDIX: NON-ENGLISH TERMS AND PHRASES

Tibetan Terms and Phrases

A-bo ཨ་བོ།
 A-bu ཨ་བུ།
 A-ce sru mo ཨ་ཙེ་སུ་མོ།
 A-ce ཨ་ཙེ།
 A-ce'I mag pa ཨ་ཙེ་འི་མག་པ།
 A-che ཨ་ཆེ།
 A-da ཨ་ད།
 A-khu ཨ་ཁུ།
 A-khu-khu-bo ཨ་ཁུ་ཁུ་བོ།
 A-lags 'Jam-dbyangs ཨ་ལགས་འཇམ་དབྱངས།
 A-lags Dbyig-kya' ཨ་ལགས་དབྱིག་ལྷ།
 A-lags Dor-zhi ཨ་ལགས་དོར་ཞི།
 A-lags Shar-gdong ཨ་ལགས་ཤར་གདོང་།
 A-ma ཨ་མ།
 A-mache ཨ་མ་ཆེ།
 A-machung ཨ་མ་ཚུང་།
 A-mes ཨ་མེས།
 A-myes ཨ་མྱེས།
 A-ne ཨ་ནེ།
 A-nye tsho ཨ་ནེ་ཚོ།
 A-nye ཨ་ནེ།
 A-pa gong ja ཨ་པ་གོང་ཇ།
 A-pa ཨ་པ།
 A-pha ཨ་ཕ།
 A-pha-pha ཨ་ཕ་ཕ།
 A-phyi-phyi-mo ཨ་ཕྱི་ཕྱི་མོ།
 A-rga ཨ་ར།
 A-rgya ཨ་རྒྱ།
 A-rogs ཨ་རོགས།
 A-sdi ཨ་སྡི།
 A-sdu ཨ་སུ།
 A-shan-shan-po ཨ་ཤང་ཤང་པོ།

A-spo'u ཨ་སྤོའ།
 A-sru ཨ་སུ།
 A-ta ཨ་ཏ།
 A-ya ཨ་ཡ།
 A-yi ཨ་ཡི།
 A-zhang 'tshams 'dri ཨ་ཤང་འཚམས་འདྲི།
 A-zhang nyin gcig bkur, pha ma
 tshe gang bkur
 ཨ་ཤང་ཉིན་གཅིག་བཀུར། པ་མ་ཆེ་གང་བཀུར།
 A-zhang phyir ldog ཨ་ཤང་ཕྱིར་ལོག།
 A-zhang ཨ་ཤང་།
 Achen Gangsrgyab ཨ་ཆེན་གངས་རྒྱལ།
 Achen Gangsri ཨ་ཆེན་གངས་རི།
 Am skad ཨ་མ་སྐད།
 Amdo ཨ་མདོ།
 Amdoba ཨ་མདོ་བ།
 Amnyes rmachen ཨ་མྱེས་རྩ་ཆེན།
 Apa che ཨ་པ་ཆེ།
 Apha che ཨ་ཕ་ཆེ།
 Arjia Rinpoche ཨ་རྒྱ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།
 Aur rtag ལྷུར་རྟགས།
 Bag bska། བག་བསྐལ།
 Bag chags བག་ཆགས།
 Bag chen བག་ཆེན།
 Bag chung བག་ཚུང་།
 Bag glu བག་ལུ།
 Bag gur བག་གུར།
 Bag ma བག་མ།
 Bag po བག་པོ།
 Bag rdzongs བག་རྫོངས།
 Bag rogs 'dem pa བག་རོགས་འདེམ་པ།
 Bag rta bsu ba བག་རྟ་བསུ་བ།
 Bag skyel བག་སྐལ།
 Ban བན།

Ban-de-mkhar བན་དེ་མཁར།
 Ban-de-tshe-ring བན་དེ་ཚེ་རིང་།
 Bar ba བར་བ།
 Bar dbus gtsang ru bzhi
 བར་དབུས་གཙང་རུ་བཞི།
 Bar du bzhag བར་དུ་བཞག།
 Bar pa'I bstod glu len pa
 བར་པའི་བསྟོད་གླུ་ལེན་པ།
 Batse བཙེ།
 Bayan བཡན།
 Bayanhari བཡན་ཧ་རི།
 Bca' ba བཅའ་བ།
 Bdag dpe tshogs བདག་དཔེ་ཚོགས།
 Bde-mchog-rgyal བདེ་མཚོག་རྒྱལ།
 Bdechen བདེ་ཆེན།
 Bdud-lha-rgyal བདུད་ལྷ་རྒྱལ།
 Bdud-lha-rgyal gyi bdud phrug
 བདུད་ལྷ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་བདུད་ཕུག།
 Bismdo བེས་མདོ།
 Bkra shis 'jog pa བརྒྱ་ཤིས་འཇོག་པ།
 Bkra shis byed pa བརྒྱ་ཤིས་བྱེད་པ།
 Bkra-lo བརྒྱ་ལོ།
 Bkra-rgyal བརྒྱ་རྒྱལ།
 Bkra-shis བརྒྱ་ཤིས།
 Blabrang Bkrashis'kyil ལྷ་བཟང་བརྒྱ་ཤིས་འབྱུག།
 Blo-bzang-'phrin-las-lhun-grub-
 chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan
 ལྷོ་བཟང་འཕྲིན་ལས་རྒྱན་བྱ་བ་ཚས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་མཚན།
 Blo-bzang-dge-legs-bstan-pa'i-
 mkhan-chen ལྷོ་བཟང་དགེ་ལགས་བསྟན་པའི་མཁན་ཆེན།
 Bod chol kha gsum བོད་ཚལ་ཁ་གསུམ།
 Bod rigs rang skyong khul
 བོད་རིགས་རང་སྐྱོང་ཁུལ།
 Bod skad gtsang ma བོད་སྐད་གཙང་མ།
 Bodchen བོད་ཆེན།
 Bon བོན།
 Bongstag བོང་སྟག།
 Brag-dgon-pa བྲག་དགོན་པ།
 Brag-dgon-pa Dkon-mchog-bstan-
 pa-rab-rgyas

བྲག་དགོན་པ་དགོན་མཚོག་བསྟན་པ་རབ་རྒྱས།
 Bsam-grub-tshe-ring བསམ་གྲུབ་ཚེ་རིང་།
 Bsam-gtan བསམ་གཏན།
 Bsang khri བསང་ཁྲི།
 Bsang བསང་།
 Bsangchu བསང་ཆུ།
 Bse dri བཤེ་དྲི།
 Bskal བསྐལ།
 Bsod-nyams-skyid བསོད་ནམས་སྦྱིད།
 Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho བསྟན་འཛིན་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 Bsu glu seng a dbyangs len pa
 བསུ་གླུ་སེང་ཨ་དབངས་ལེན་པ།
 Btsan po བཅན་པོ།
 Bu me ཐུ་མེད།
 Bu mo ཐུ་མོ།
 Bu pho ཐུ་ཕོ།
 Bu skal ma ཐུ་སྐལ་མ།
 Bu skal ཐུ་སྐལ།
 Bu spun mna' ma sgang len
 ཐུ་སྦྱན་མནའ་མ་སྐང་ལེན།
 Bu tsha ཐུ་ཚ།
 Bu yar ཐུ་ཡར་ཀླུ་མེད།
 Bu ཐུ།
 Bubub-tsa ཐུ་བུ་ཚ།
 Bud med ཐུད་མེད།
 Bud myed ཐུད་མྱེད།
 Byame ཐུ་མེ།
 Byams-pa ཐུམས་པ།
 Byang-skar ཐུང་སྐར།
 Byed ཐེུད།
 Byi bo ཐུ་བོ།
 Byi lu ཐུ་ལུ།
 Byi mo ཐུ་མོ།
 Byi po ཐུ་པོ།
 Byis bu ཐུ་ཤི་བུ།
 Byis lu ཐུ་ཤི་ལུ།
 Byis mo ཐུ་ཤི་མོ།
 Byis pa ཐུ་ཤི་པ།
 Bzan po'i snying stobs བཙན་པོའི་སྦྱིང་སྟོབས།
 Bzang sa བཙང་ས།

Bzho bzung བཞོ་བཟུང་།
 Bzho zung བཞོ་ཟུང་།
 Bzo ba བཟོ་བ།
 Bzo mgo བཟོ་མགོ།
 ‘Brog-pa འབྲོག་པ།
 ‘Ba’ rdzong འབའ་རྫོང་།
 ‘Bab rten gtong ba འབབ་རྟེན་གཏོང་བ།
 ‘Barkhams འབར་ཁམས།
 ‘Bras འབྲས།
 ‘Brog skad འབྲོག་སྐད།
 ‘Bru brgya ma འབྲུ་བརྩ་མ།
 ‘Brug mo skyid འབྲུག་མོ་སྐྱིད།
 ‘Brug-lha འབྲུག་ལྷ།
 ‘Brugchu འབྲུག་ཆུ།
 ‘Bum-skyabs འབུས་སྐུ་བས།

 Chab cha ཆབ་ཆ།
 Chab-‘gag Rta-mgrin ཆབ་འགག་རྟ་མགྲིན།
 Chabmdo ཆབ་མཛད།
 Chad ཆད།
 Changthang རྩང་ཐང་།
 Chang ཆང་།
 Che ཆེ།
 Chol kha ཆོལ་ཁ།
 Chos rgyal ཆོས་རྒྱལ།
 Chos-mchog ཆོས་མཚོག།
 Chukhama རྩུ་ཁ་མ།
 Chung ma རྩུང་མ།
 Chung རྩུང།
 Cone ཆ་ནེ།
 ‘Chi-med-rdo-rje འཆི་མེད་རྡོ་རྗེ།

 Dada ཏ་ཏ།
 Dag cha དག་ཆ།
 Dalai Lama ཏཱ་ལའི་ལྷ་མ།
 Dam can དམ་ཅན།
 Dam-chos དམ་ཆོས།
 Darlag དར་ལག།
 Darmtsho དར་མཚོ།
 Dbang-rgyal དབང་རྒྱལ།

Dbusgtsang དབུས་གཙང་།
 Dbusgtsang skad དབུས་གཙང་སྐད།
 Dbyar rtas dgun ‘bu དབྱར་རྩ་དཀྱུན་འབྲུ།
 De ba tshang nga bshad rgyu mang
 gi དེ་བ་ཚང་ང་བཤད་རྒྱ་མང་གི།
 De tshang gi mag pa དེ་བ་ཚང་གི་མག་པ།
 De tshang gi mna’ ma དེ་བ་ཚང་གི་མནའ་མ།
 Dga’ rogs དགའ་རོགས།
 Dga’bde དགའ་བདེ།
 Dge lugs pa དགེ་ལུགས་པ།
 Dge-‘dun-‘tsho དགེ་འདུན་འཚོ།
 Dge-‘dun-chos-‘phel དགེ་འདུན་ཆོས་འཕེལ།
 Dge-‘dun-lhun-grub དགེ་འདུན་ལྷུན་གྲུབ།
 Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho
 དགེ་བཤེས་ཤེས་རབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 Dgebshes དགེ་བཤེས།
 Dgebsnyen དགེ་བཤྩན།
 Dkar khyab དཀར་ཁྱབ།
 Dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛེས།
 Dkar zas དཀར་ཟས།
 Dkar དཀར།
 Dkon-mchog-chos-‘phel
 དཀོན་མཚོག་ཆོས་འཕེལ།
 Dkon-mchog དཀོན་མཚོག།
 Dkon-mchog-bstan-pa ‘i-sgron-me
 དཀོན་མཚོག་བསྐྱར་པའི་སྒྲོན་མེ།
 Dkyel yangs དཀྱེལ་ཡངས།
 Dmag ‘gog དམག་འགོག།
 Dmag gnong དམག་གཞོན།
 Dmar zas དམར་ཟས།
 Dmar དམར།
 Dngul དངུལ།
 Dngulra དངུལ་ར།
 Don-grub རྟོན་གྲུབ།
 Don-grub-rgyal རྟོན་གྲུབ་རྒྱལ།
 Dor-zhi Rinpoche རོར་ཞི་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།
 Dp’a-ris Don-grub དཔའ་རིས་རྟོན་གྲུབ།
 Dpa’-mo དཔའ་མོ།
 Dpa’-ris Sangs-rgyas དཔའ་རིས་སངས་རྒྱལ།
 Dpa’ris དཔའ་རིས།

Dpal ldan lha mo དཔལ་ལྷན་མ་མོ།
 Dpon po དཔོན་པོ།
 Dri skur དྲི་སྐར།
 Dri དྲི།
 Drol-ma རྩོལ་མ།
 Dugchu དུག་ཚུ།
 Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las
 དུང་དཀར་བློ་བཟང་འཕྲིན་ལས།
 'Dod chung chog shes འདོད་ཚུང་ཚོག་ཤེས།
 'Dre mo འདྲེ་མོ།
 'Dren-byed འདྲེན་བྱེད།

 G.yang 'bod གཡང་འབོད།
 G.yar mo thang གཡར་མོ་ཐང།
 Gad skya གད་སྐྱ།
 Kanlho ཀན་ལྷོ།
 Gcan-'od-zer གཅན་འོད་ཟེར།
 Gcantsha གཅན་ཚ།
 Gcen mo གཅེན་མོ།
 Gcen po གཅེན་པོ།
 Gcen གཅེན།
 Gcig sgril གཅིག་སྒྲིལ།
 Gcod-pa-klu-rgyal གཙོད་པ་ལུ་རྒྱལ།
 Gcod-pa-thar གཙོད་པ་ཐར།
 Gcung mo གཙུང་མོ།
 Gcung po གཙུང་པོ།
 Gcung གཙུང།
 Gesar གེ་སར།
 Glang-dar-ma གླང་དར་མ།
 Glo gzer གློ་གཟེར།
 Glo gzur གློ་གཟུར།
 Glu ba གུ་བ།
 Gnam sa go'byed གནམ་ས་གོ་འབྱེད།
 Gnyen bshes གཉེན་བཤེས།
 Gnyen gyi srid pa bco brgyad
 གཉེན་གྱི་སྤྱིད་པ་བཅོ་བརྒྱད།
 Gnyen nye phan tshun ngos 'zing
 གཉེན་ཉེ་པན་ཚུན་ངོས་འཛིན་པ།
 Gnyen rtags གཉེན་རྟགས།
 Gnyen tshang གཉེན་ཚང།

Gos bzo lwa གོས་བཟོ་ལ།
 Gos grib གོས་གྲིབ།
 Gos rin rgyan rin གོས་རིན་རྒྱན་རིན།
 Gra sgrig གྲམ་སྒྲིག།
 Gral sgrig pa གྲམ་སྒྲིག་པ།
 Gro 'bras གྲོ་འབྲས།
 Gro ma གྲོ་མ།
 Grotshang གྲོ་ཚང།
 Gsar brje གསར་བརྩེ།
 Gser rta lba rung sgar གསེར་རྟ་ལ་རུང་སྐར།
 Gshog ka གཤོག་ཀ།
 Gshog pa གཤོག་པ།
 Gtar kha གཏར་ཀ།
 Gterlenkha གཏེར་ལེན་ཀ།
 Gtsos གཙོས།
 Gtul ma གཏུལ་མ།
 Gu-ru-'tsho གུ་རུ་འཚོ།
 Gung-thang Rinpoche གུང་ཐང་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།
 Gungho གུང་ཏ།
 Gur གུར།
 Gyos གྱོས།
 Gyos mo གྱོས་མོ།
 Gyos po གྱོས་པོ།
 Gza' གཟམ།
 Gzhi grub rig pa གཞི་བྱུང་རིག་པ།
 Gzhi གཞི།
 Gzhis lu གཞིས་ལུ།
 Gzhis ma གཞིས་མ།
 Gzhis mes གཞིས་མེས།
 Gzhis mo གཞིས་མོ།
 Gzhis ning གཞིས་ཉིང།
 Gzhis tsha གཞིས་ཚ།
 Gzhiskartse གཞིས་ཀ་རྩེ།
 Gzhug གཞུག།
 'Gyan Sangs-rgyas-don-grub
 འགྲན་སངས་རྒྱས་དོན་བྱུང།

 Hos rgan ཧོས་རྒྱན།
 Hungchen ཧུང་ཆེན།

Ja ‘phyar ba ཇ་ཕམ་པ།
 Ja bsres ཇ་བསྐྱེ།
 Ja dkar ཇ་དཀར།
 Ja glu len pa ཇ་གླུ་ལེན་པ།
 Ja nag ཇ་ནག།
 Ja rgyus bshad pa’I glu ja ma lo len
 pa ཇ་རྒྱལ་བཤད་པའི་གླུ་ཇ་མ་ལོ་ལེན་།
 Ja thab ཇ་ཐབ།
 Jo jo ཇོ་ཇོ།
 Jo ཇོ།
 ‘Jam-dbyangs-blo-gros འཇམ་དབྱངས་བློ་གྲོས།
 ‘Jam-dbyangs-thub-bstan
 འཇམ་དབྱངས་ཐུབ་བསྐྱེན།
 ‘Jam-dbyangs-skyid འཇམ་དབྱངས་སྐྱིད།
 ‘Jigs-med-‘gro-phan འཇིགས་མེད་འགྲོ་ཕན།
 ‘Jigs-med-bstan-pa’i-dbang-phyug
 འཇིགས་མེད་བསྐྱེན་པའི་དབང་ཕྱུག
 ‘Jigs-med-thegs-mchog
 འཇིགས་མེད་ཐེགས་མཆོག།

 Kalsang Rinchen ཀླམ་བཟང་རིན་ཆེན།
 Kha ‘dang ཀ་འདང་།
 Kha btags ཀ་བཏགས།
 Kha g.yangd bkra shis ‘bod
 ཀ་གཡང་བཀྲ་ཤིས་འབོད།
 Kha ya na zlas[zla’i] ston mo
 ཀ་ཡ་ན་ལྷས་[ལྷའི་]སྟོན་མོ།
 Khabrda ཀ་བར།
 Khams skad ཀམས་སྐད།
 Khams ཀམས།
 Khartsan ཀར་ཙན།
 Kher ‘dug tshang ཀེར་འདུག་ཚང་།
 Kho’I mna’ ma ཀོའི་མནའ་མ།
 Khrika ཀྲི་ཀ།
 Khu ཀུ།
 Khyi kha brtses ཀྲི་ཀ་བརྟེས།
 Khyim mtshe’I bag len ཀྲིམ་མཚའི་བག་ལེན།
 Khyim pa ཀྲིམ་པ།
 Khyo bo ཀྲོ་བ།
 Khyo ga ཀྲོ་ག།

Khyo’I a-ba a-ma ཀྲོའི་ཨ་བ་ཨ་མ།
 Khyos mo ཀྲོས་མོ།
 Khyos po ཀྲོས་པོ།
 Klog-mkhan-zhig ཀླག་མཁན་ཞིག།
 Klu-mo ཀླུ་མོ།
 Klu-rgyal ཀླུ་རྒྱལ།
 Kluchu ཀླུ་མུ།
 Ku re rtsed gku ཀུ་རེ་རེད་ཀུ།
 Kun-grub-rgyal ཀུན་གྲུབ་རྒྱལ།

 Labrang ལ་བང་།
 Lag skor ལག་སྐོར།
 Lag skyes gra sgrig ལག་སྐྱེས་ག་སྐྱིག།
 Lags ལགས།
 Lam la chas pa ལམ་ལ་ཆས་པ།
 Lam ལམ།
 Lama Tsepo (Bla-ma btsan-po)
 ལམ་པ་ཅེ་པོ།
 Lama ལམ་པ།
 Lcam mo ལམ་མོ།
 Lci ba ལྷེ་བ།
 Ldug sprug ལུག་སྤྱུག།
 Ldur ri ལུར་རི།
 Lha-lung Dpal-gyi-rdo-rje
 ལྷ་ལུང་དཔལ་གྱི་དོ་རྗེ།
 Lha-mo ལྷ་མོ།
 Lha-mo-skyabs ལྷ་མོ་སྐྱབས།
 Lhao-mo-’tsho ལྷ་མོ་འཚོ།
 Lhas ra’I nang du chos skor
 brgyag[rgyag] pa
 ལྷས་རའི་ནང་དུ་ཚོས་སྐོར་བརྒྱག་[རྒྱག]པ།
 Lhasa ལྷས།
 Lhun-‘grub ལུན་འགྲུབ།
 Ljang-bu ལྷང་བུ།
 Ljanglha ལྷང་ལྷ།
 Lo res ལོ་རེས།
 Lta log pa ལྷ་ལོག་པ།
 Lta log tshogs pa ལྷ་ལོག་ཚོགས་པ།
 Lta log ལྷ་ལོག།

Ma མ།
 Ma ce མ་ཙེ།
 Ma che che མ་ཙེ་ཙེ།
 Ma che མ་ཙེ།
 Ma gyar མ་གཡར།
 Ma ni མ་ཉི།
 Ma phyi ma མ་ཕྱི་མ།
 Ma rgan མ་རྒན།
 Ma sor མ་སོར།
 Ma spun མ་སྤྲུལ།
 Ma sring མ་སྤྲིང་།
 Ma sru mo མ་སྤྲུ་མོ།
 Ma sru མ་སྤྲུ།
 Ma yar མ་ཡར།
 Ma zhang མ་ཞང་།
 Mag མག།
 Mag bka མག་བཀའ།
 Mag ga མག་ག།
 Mag lcag bstod glu len pa
 མག་ལྷག་བསྟོད་བླ་ལེན་པ།
 Mag pa bzhag མག་པ་བཞག།
 Mag pa gsar ba bu dang ‘dra, go
 khar lhung na khyi dang ‘dra
 མག་པ་གསར་བ་བྱ་དང་འདྲ། གོ་ཁར་ལྷུང་ན་ཁྱི་དང་འདྲ།
 Mag pa gsar ba མག་པ་གསར་བ།
 Mag pa མག་པ།
 Mag rta མག་རྟ།
 Mangra མང་ར།
 Markhuthang མར་ཁུ་ཐང་།
 Marnang མར་ནང་།
 Mchod-pa’i-lha-mo མཚོད་པའི་ལྷ་མོ།
 Md’abzhi མདའ་བཞི།
 Mda’-tshan-pa མདའ་ཚན་པ།
 Mdo ba མདོ་བ།
 Mdo kham མདོ་ཁམས།
 Mdo smad pa མདོ་སྐད་པ།
 Mdo མདོ།
 Mdola མདོ་ལ།
 Mdolaringmo མདོ་ལ་རིང་མོ།
 Mdosmad rt'i chol kha མདོ་སྐད་རྟའི་ཚལ་ཁ།

Mdosmad མདོ་སྐད།
 Mdostod mi'i chol kha མདོ་སྐད་མིའི་ཚལ་ཁ།
 Mdostod མདོ་སྐད།
 Mdze མཛེ།
 Mdzo mo མཛོ་མོ།
 Mdzo མཛོ།
 Mdzodge མཛོ་དགེ།
 Me-lce མེ་ལེ།
 Mes po མེས་པོ།
 Mes rgyal མེས་རྒྱལ།
 Mgaritse མགར་རྩེ།
 Mgo ‘dogs cho ga sgrub pa
 མགོ་འདོགས་ཚོགས་སྐྱབ་པ།
 Mgo log ba མགོ་ལོག་པ།
 Mgo log bod rigs rang skyong khul
 མགོ་ལོག་བོད་རིགས་རང་རྩོད་ཁུལ།
 Mgo skad མགོ་སྐད།
 Mgolog མགོ་ལོག།
 Mgolog Zla-bhe མགོ་ལོག་ལྷ་རྩེ།
 Mgon po མགོན་པོ།
 Mgon-po-skyabs མགོན་པོ་སྐུབས།
 Mgron-bu མགོན་བུ།
 Mi ‘grigs bza’ ba ‘thor na bzang, mi
 drags nad pa shi na bzang
 མི་འགྲིགས་བཟའ་བ་འཛོར་ན་བཟང་། མི་དྲག་ནད་པ་ཤི་ན་བཟང་།
 Mi bu མི་བུ།
 Mi kher ‘dug མི་ཁེར་འདུག།
 Mi rkyang མི་རྒྱང་།
 Mi མི།
 Mig gi zur mda’ མིག་གི་བུར་མདའ།
 Min མིང་།
 Ming po མིང་པོ།
 Ming rta མིང་རྟ།
 Minyon མིན་ཡོན།
 Mjug ma མཇུག་མ།
 Mkhan po མཁན་པོ།
 Mkhan-po ‘Jigs-phun མཁན་པོ་འཇིགས་ལུན།
 Mkhan-po Pad-ma-rig-dzin
 མཁན་པོ་པད་མ་རིག་འཛོན།
 Mkhan-po Tshul-khrims-lbo-gros

མཁན་པོ་རྩལ་ཁྲིམས་ཐོག་ནས།
 Mkhar མཁན།
 Mkhar-‘bum མཁན་འབུམ།
 Mkhar-mo མཁན་མོ།
 Mkhar-nag Byams-pa-bkra-shis
 མཁན་ནག་བྱམས་པ་བག་ཤིས།
 Mna མནའ།
 Mna’ ma blangs མནའ་མ་བླངས།
 Mna’ ma gsar ba མནའ་མ་གསར་བ།
 Mna’ ma khyid/khrid dang
 མནའ་མ་ཁྱིད་(ཁྱིད་)དང་།
 Mna’ ma མནའ་མ།
 Mo ba མོ་བ།
 Mo ma མོ་མ།
 Mo slog མོ་སྟག།
 Mo མོ།
 Mo’I mag pa མའི་མག་པ།
 Mtsho sngon po མཚོ་སྟོན་པོ།
 Mtsho-gces མཚོ་གཅེས།
 Mtshobyang མཚོ་བྱང་།
 Mtsholho མཚོ་ལྷོ།
 Mtshonub མཚོ་ལུབ།
 Mtshoshar མཚོ་ཤར།
 Mtshosngon མཚོ་སྟོན།
 Mying bo རྩིང་པོ།
 Mying rta རྩིང་རྟ།
 Na gor mo ན་གོར་མོ།
 Nag mo ནག་མོ།
 Nag po ནག་པོ།
 Nag tshang ནག་ཚང་།
 Nagchu ནག་ཐུ།
 Nagmo ནག་མོ།
 Nagormo ན་གོར་མོ།
 Nam-kha’i-nor-bu ན་མ་མཁའའི་ནོར་བུ།
 Nang cho ནང་ཇོ།
 Nang ma ནང་མ།
 Nangs ja ནངས་ཇ།
 Ne ནེ།
 Ngag-dbang Tshe-ring-bkra-shis

ངག་དབང་ཚེ་རིང་བག་ཤིས།
 Nged khu/kyi de ངེད་ཁུ་(ཀྱི)དེ།
 Ngo gnyis ma ངོ་གཉིས་མ།
 Ngo tsha ངོ་ཙ།
 Ngye ring tshos a-zhang tshang
 mgron ‘bod ཉེ་རིང་ཚོས་ཨ་ཁང་ཚང་མགོན་འཛིན།
 Nu bo ལུ་བོ།
 Nu mo ལུ་མོ།
 Nu rin ལུ་རིན།
 Nu ལུ།
 Nubmtsho ལུབ་མཚོ།
 Nye bo ཉེ་བོ།
 Nye ring ཉེ་རིང་།
 Nye sa ཉེ་ས།
 Nyi-gzhon ཉི་གཞན།
 ‘O ja འོ་ཇ།
 Pa པ།
 Pad-ma པདྨ།
 Pad-ma-‘bum པདྨ་འབུམ།
 Pad-ma-dbang-chen པདྨ་དབང་ཆེན།
 Pad-ma-lhun-grub པདྨ་ལུན་གྲུབ།
 Padmasambhava པདྨ་འབྲུང་གནས།
 Panchen Lama ཐཱ་མ་པ་ཆེན།
 Panchen པཎ་ཆེན།
 Pang gdan པང་གདན།
 Pha gyar པ་གཡར།
 Pha ma spun པ་མ་སྤུན།
 Pha phyi ma པ་ཕྱི་མ།
 Pha skad gtsang ma bzhad pa
 པ་སྐད་གཙང་མ་བཤད་པ།
 Pha spun པ་སྤུན།
 Pha sring skyes ma པ་སྤིང་སྟེས་མ།
 Pha sring skyes པ་སྤིང་སྟེས།
 Pha yar པ་ཡར།
 Pha པ།
 Pha’i phyed a-khu, ma’I phyed a-ne
 པའི་ཕྱེད་ཨ་ཁུ་མའི་ཕྱེད་ཨ་ནེ།
 Phag པག

Phag-mo-bkra-shis ཕག་མོ་བརྟ་ཤིས།
 Pho lo bco lnga bud nas blo pha ma
 ‘dri, mo lo bco lnga bud nas zas ma
 ma-slongs མོ་ལོ་བཅོ་ལུང་ནལ་སྒོ་པ་མ་འདྲི།
 མོ་ལོ་བཅོ་ལུང་ནལ་མ་མ་སྒོངས།
 Pho skyes མོ་སྒྲེས།
 Pho slog མོ་སྒྲོག
 Phu ཕུ།
 Phu bo ཕུ་བོ།
 Phu nu ཕུ་ནུ།
 Phun-tshogs-rgyal ཕུན་ཚོགས་རྒྱལ།
 Phyi ma ཕྱི་མ།
 Phyi ཕྱི།
 Phying zhwa ཕྱིང་ཞྭ།
 Phyogs kha ཕྱོགས་ཀལ།
 Phyu pa ཕྱུ་པ།
 Po-bo-pho-pa བོ་བོ་ཕོ་པ།
 Puhua Dongzhi འཕགས་པ་དོན་གྲུབ།
 ‘Phongs res འཕོངས་རེས།
 ‘Phrad ma འཕྲད་མ།

Ral gdan རལ་གདན།
 Ras lwa རས་ལ།
 Rdo-grags རྩ་གྲགས།
 Rdo-rje-rgyal རྩ་རྗེ་རྒྱལ།
 Rdo-rje-tshe-ring རྩ་རྗེ་ཚེ་རིང་།
 Rdobis རོ་བེས།
 Rdung len རུང་ལེན།
 Rdzongs ba རྩོངས་བ།
 Rdzongs རྩོངས།
 Rebgong རེབ་གོང་།
 Rgan mo ཀན་མོ།
 Rgan po ཀན་པོ།
 Rgand po ཀད་པོ།
 Rgya lwa རྒྱ་ལ།
 Rgya rgan རྒྱ་རྒྱན།
 Rgya རྒྱ།
 Rgya-nag-nyams-zhib-pa
 རྒྱ་ནག་ཉམས་ཞིབ་པ།
 Rgyal khams རྒྱལ་ཁམས།

Rgyalrong རྒྱལ་རོང་།
 Rgyang ‘phen pa རྒྱང་འཕེན་པ།
 Rgyu chang རྒྱུ་ཆང་།
 Rgyu mgo rta རྒྱུ་མགོ་རྟ།
 Rgyu rng bo’u རྒྱུ་རྟ་བོ་ལུ།
 Rgyu རྒྱུ།
 Rgyu‘ded རྒྱུ་འདེད།
 Rig ma རིག་མ།
 Rig-‘dzin རིག་འཛིན།
 Rig-legs རིག་ལེགས།
 Ril bu རིལ་བུ།
 Ril lu རིལ་ལུ།
 Ril ma རིལ་མ།
 Rin po che རིན་པོ་ཆེ།
 Rin-chen-don-grub རིན་ཆེན་དོན་གྲུབ།
 Rinzin Thargyal རིག་འཛིན་དར་རྒྱལ།
 Rje tsong kha ba རྗེ་ཙོང་ཁ་བ།
 Rjes ma རྗེས་མ།
 Rked bcing རྟེན་བཅིང་།
 Rked rags རྟེན་རགས།
 Rmachen རྟམ་ཆེན།
 Rmachu རྟམ་ཆུ།
 Rmalho bod rigs rang skyong khul
 རྟམ་ཆོ་བོད་རིགས་རང་རྒྱུང་ཁུལ།
 Rmalho རྟམ་ཆོ།
 Rmastod རྟམ་སྟོད།
 Rme-sprul-bstan-‘dzin-rgya-mtsho
 རྟམ་སྤུལ་བསྐྱན་འཛིན་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 Rmo རྟོ།
 Rnam sras རྟས་སྤྲས།
 Rnam-sras རྟས་སྤྲས།
 Rngaba bod rigs dang chang rigs
 rang skyong khul
 རྩ་བོ་བོད་རིགས་དང་ཆེད་རིགས་རང་རྒྱུང་ཁུལ།
 Rngaba རྩ་བ།
 Rnying ba རྟེང་བ།
 Rong ba རོང་བ།
 Rong ba’I srol རོང་བའི་སྟལ།
 Rong ma ‘brog རོང་མ་འབྲོག།
 Rong mo རོང་མོ།

Rong skad རོང་སྐད།
 Rongbo རོང་བོ།
 Rtabo རྟ་བོ།
 Rtol bo རྟོལ་བོ།
 Rtol lu རྟོལ་ལུ།
 Rtsam pa རྩམ་པ།
 Rtsekhog རྩེ་ཁོག།
 Rtser snyeg རྩེར་སྟེག།
 Rtsis pa རྩིས་པ།
 Ru skor rgan po རུ་སྐོར་རྒན་པོ།
 Rus pa རུས་པ།
 Rus rgyud རུས་རྒྱུད།

 Salar ས་ལར།
 Sangchu བསང་ཚུ།
 Sangs-bha སངས་བླ།
 Sangs-rgyas སངས་རྒྱས།
 Sangs-rgyas-rgyal སངས་རྒྱས་རྒྱལ།
 Sbra སྤར།
 Sbun ya chung ba སྤུན་ཡ་ཚུང་བ།
 Sbun ya སྤུན་ཡ།
 Sde dpon སྡེ་དཔོན།
 Sebo སེ་བོ།
 Sechen ribo སེ་ཆེན་རི་བོ།
 Serchen ribo སེར་ཆེན་རི་བོ།
 Sgargsar སྐར་གསར།
 Sgo chang gi glu len pa dang bro
 rtse ba སྐོ་ཆང་གི་ལུ་ལེན་པ་དང་ཕོ་ཆེ་བ།
 Sgo Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho སྐོ་ཤེས་རབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 Sgren-po སྐྱེན་པོ།
 Sgrol-dkar-skyid སྐྱོལ་དཀར་སྦྱིད།
 Sgrol-ma སྐྱོལ་མ།
 Sgrol-ma-skyid སྐྱོལ་མ་སྦྱིད།
 Sgrol-ma-thar སྐྱོལ་མ་ཐར།
 Sgyug སྦྱུག།
 Sgyug lwa 'bul ba སྦྱུག་ལ་འབུལ་བ།
 Sgyug mo སྦྱུག་མོ།
 Sgyug po sgyug mo ja 'dren
 སྦྱུག་པོ་སྦྱུག་མོ་རྩ་འདྲེན།
 Sgyug po སྦྱུག་པོ།

Sha khrag ཤ་ཁྲག།
 Sha nye ཤ་ཉེ།
 Sha nye ma ཤ་ཉེ་མ།
 Sha rin khrag rin ཤ་རིན་ཁྲག་རིན།
 Sha rus pa gtsang mi gtsang
 ཤ་རུས་པ་གཙང་མི་གཙང།
 Sha rus pa ཤ་རུས་པ།
 Sha rus rgyud ཤ་རུས་རྒྱུད།
 Shabs-dkar Tshogs-drug-rang-grol
 ཞབས་དཀར་ཚོགས་དྲུག་རང་རྩོལ།
 Shakharpa ཞབས་དཀར་པ།
 Shan [Zhang] ཞང།
 Shar Skal-ldan-rgya-mtsho
 ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 Sharkog ཤར་ཁོག།
 Sherab Dargye ཤེས་རབ་དར་རྒྱས།
 Sho nye ཤོ་ཉེ།
 Si tshar སི་ཚར།
 Skal-bzang-nor-bu སྐལ་བཟང་ནོར་བུ།
 Skar-'tsho-skyid སྐར་འཚོ་སྦྱིད།
 Skar-kho སྐར་ཁོ།
 Ske rgyan སེ་རྒྱན།
 Skeba སེ་བ།
 Skra phab pa སྐ་ཕལ་བ།
 Skra shad pa སྐ་ཤད་པ།
 Sku spun སུ་སྤུན།
 Sku sring སུ་སྤིང།
 Sku སུ།
 Sku'bum སུ་འབུམ།
 Skud mo སུད་མོ།
 Skud po སུད་པོ།
 Skya ring སྐུ་རིང་།
 Skyergu སྐེ་རུ།
 Skyes pa སྐུས་པ།
 Skyes sa སྐུས་ས་།
 Slog pa སྟོག་པ།
 Smad mdo kham sgang drug
 སྐད་མདོ་ཁམས་སྐང་དྲུག།
 Smadma སྐད་མ།
 Sman-lba-skyabs སྐན་ལ་སྐུབས།

Sna khros མ་ཁྲོས།
 Sna thag btags མ་ཐག་བཏགས།
 Sngags ma སྒགས་མ།
 Sngags pa སྒགས་པ།
 Sngon chod las སྒོན་ཚད་ལས།
 Sngon ma སྒོན་མ།
 Snyid mo སྟིང་མོ།
 Snyid po སྟིང་པོ།
 Snying-lcags སྟིང་ལྷགས།
 So-ba Sprang-thar-rgya-mtsho

སོ་བ་སྤང་ཐར་བྱ་མཚོ།
 Soloma སོ་ལ་མ།
 Spo bo སྟོ་བོ།
 Spo སྟོ།
 Sprul sku སྤྲུལ་སྐུ།
 spun cha 'dug སུན་ཆ་འདྲག།
 Spun chung ba སུན་ཅུང་བ།
 Spun ya ma སུན་ཡ་མ།
 Spun ya སུན་ཡ།
 Spun སུན།
 Sras mo སྤྲས་མོ།
 Sras སྤྲས།
 Sring mo སྤིང་མོ།
 Sring rgan ma སྤིང་རྒན་མ།
 Sring སྤིང།
 Sru སྤུ།
 Sru mo སྤུ་མོ།
 Srung ma 'khrugs སྤུང་མ་འཁྲུགས།
 Stod mnga' ris skor gsum
 སྟོང་མངའ་རིས་སྟོར་གསུམ།
 Ston mo bsham pa སྟོན་མོ་བཤམ་པ།
 Ston mo སྟོན་མོ།
 Stong'khor སྟོང་སྐོར།
 Sun chung ba སུན་ཅུང་བ།
 Sun སུན།

Thebo ཐེ་བོ།
 Them rtsong ཐེམ་རྫོང་།
 Thog rgyag ཐོག་རྒྱག།
 Thogs-med ཐོགས་མེད།

Thub-bstan-bsam-'phel

ཐུབ་བསྟན་བསམ་འཕེལ།
 Thug pa ཐུག་པ།
 Thunte ཐུན་ཏེ།
 Tsha bo ཚ་བོ།
 Tsha gzhus ཚ་གཞུག།
 Tsha mo ཚ་མོ།
 Tsha ru ཚ་རུ།
 Tsha yug ཚ་གཞུག།
 Tsha ཚ།
 Tsha'u ཚའུ།
 Tsha'u tsha gzhus ཚའུ་ཚ་གཞུག།
 Tshe-dbang-mgon-po ཚེད་བང་མགོན་པོ།
 Tshe-dbang-rdo-rje ཚེད་བང་རྡོ་རྗེ།
 Tshe-ring-bkra-shis ཚེ་རིང་བཀྲ་ཤིས།
 Tshe-ring-don-grub ཚེ་རིང་དོན་གྲུབ།
 Tshigs chang ཚེགས་ཅང་།
 Tshil mog mog ཚེལ་མོག་མོག།
 Tsho ba ཚོ་བ།
 Tsho bzhi ཚོ་བཞི།
 Tshul-khrims-blo-gros ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་བློ་གྲོས།
 Tshul-khrims-rgya-mtsho ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 Tshul-lo ཚུལ་ལོ།
 Tsongkha bdekhamts ཚོང་ཁ་བདེ་ལམས།
 Tsongkha chenpo ཚོང་ཁ་ཆེན་པོ།
 Tsongkha ཚོང་ཁ།
 'Then thug འཕེན་ཐུག།

Ya btags ཡ་བཏགས།
 Yab ཡབ།
 Yang mes ཡང་མེས།
 Yang tsha ཡང་ཚ།
 Yarmothang གཡལ་མོ་ཐང་།
 Yarnang ཡར་ནང་།
 Ye-shes-chos-'phel ཡེ་ཤེས་ཚས་འཕེལ།
 Ye-shis-sgrol-ma ཡེ་ཤེས་སྒྲོལ་མ།
 Yed ཡེད།
 Yi ཡི།
 Yid ཡིད།
 Yon-tan ཡོན་ཏན།

Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho ཡོན་ཏན་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 Yugs grib ཡུགས་གྲིབ།
 Yugs sa ma ཡུགས་ས་མ།
 Yugs sa ཡུགས་ས།
 Yulshul ཡུལ་ཤུལ།
 Yum ཡུམ།

Zas grib ཟས་གྲིབ།
 Zha yi ཇཱ་ཡི།
 Zhag gcig mna' ma ཇཁ་གཅིག་མནའ་མ།
 Zhag gsum mn'a ma ཇཁ་གསུམ་མནའ་མ།
 Zhang lha ཇམ་ལྷ།
 Zhang mdzad gnyen po ཇམ་མཛད་གཉེན་པོ།
 Zhang po ཇམ་པོ།

Zhang rta ཇམ་རྟ།
 Zhang skyes spun ma ཇམ་སྐྱེས་སྤྱན་མ།
 Zhang skyes spun ཇམ་སྐྱེས་སྤྱན།
 Zhang tshang ཇམ་ཚང་།
 Zhi lu ཇི་ལཱ།
 Zhi mo ཇི་མོ།
 Zhinhe ཇིན་ཉེ།
 Zhogs-dung ཇོགས་དུང་།
 Ziling ཇེ་ལིང་།
 Zla-ba-blo-gros ཇལ་པ་བློ་གྲོས།
 Zla-ba-rgya-mtsho ཇལ་པ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
 Zung ja ཇུང་ཇ།
 Zungchu ཇུང་ཅུ།

Chinese Terms and Phrases

Aba 阿坝

Ba 爸

Badengnima 巴登尼玛

Baima 白玛

Bao zhiming 鲍智明

Beijing Daxue 北京大学

Beijing 北京

Biao 表

Buluo fujia 不落夫家

Cai Yuanben 蔡元本

Changdu 昌都

Chen Liming 陈黎明

Cheng Lai 陈来

Chuanzhusi zhen 川主寺镇

Chuanzigou cun 传子沟村

Dadui 大队

Dan Xiuying 旦秀英

Dari 达日

Datong 大通

Dawu 大武

Delingha 德令哈

Deng Xiaoping 邓小平

Deng Xiaoyong 邓小咏

Deqing 德庆

Di di 弟弟

Die 爹

Diebu 迭部

Duixiang 对象

Dulan 都兰

Dunhuang 敦煌

Duodui 多堆

Duogansi 朵甘思

Duomei 多美

Gan er zi 干儿子

Gande 甘德

Gangcha 刚察

Gannan 甘南

Gansu 甘肃

Ganze 甘孜

Ge ni de ming 革你的命

Geermu 格尔木

Gele 格勒

Geming 革命

Gonghe 共和

Gongjia 公家

Guide 贵德

Guinan 贵南

Guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui

国家民族事务委员会

Guoluo 果洛

Haibei 海北

Haidong 海东

Hainan 海南

Haixi 海西

Haiyan 海晏

Hanzu 汉族

Henan 河南

Hezuo 合作

Hu Chunhua 胡春华

Hu Shi 胡适

Hualong 化隆

Huang Daihua 黄代华

Huangnan 黄南

Huangnanzhou minzu shifan

xuexiao 黄南州民族师范学校

Huangyuan 湟源

Huangzhong 湟中

Huarui Dongzhi 花锐东智

Huazangsi 华藏寺

Huchou 狐臭

Hui 回

Huizu 回族

Huolang 货郎

Huzhu 互助

Jia Xiaofeng 贾雪峰

Jianzha xian 尖扎县

Jiayangjia 加洋加

Jiemei 姐妹

Jin Jing 金晶
Jingkong Dashi 净空大师
Jishishan 积石山
Jiuzhi 久治
Jizhao 吉兆

Kekexili 可可西里

Lanzhou 兰州
Ledu 乐都
Li Anzhai 李安宅
Li Chenling 李臣玲
Li Keju 李克驹
Li Xiaosu 黎小苏
Lintan 临潭
Liu Zhiyang 刘志扬
Longwu 隆务
Lu Xun 鲁迅
Luqu 碌曲

Ma Hetian 马鹤天
Ma Qinglin 马箐林
Machu 玛曲
Maduo 玛多
Maketangzhen 马克唐镇
Mama 妈妈
Mao Zedong 毛泽东
Maqin 玛沁
Maqing xueshan 玛卿雪山
Mati 马蹄
Meimei 妹妹
Menyuan 门源
Minghe 民和
Mo Luo 摩罗
Mu Jianye 穆建业
Muqin 母亲

Nan pengyou 男朋友
Nangqian 囊谦
Naqu 那曲
Nvpengyou 女朋友

Ou Chaoquan 欧潮泉

Ping an 平安

Qiabuqia 恰不恰
Qiang 羌
Qifeng 祁丰
Qilian 祁连
Qilianshan 祁连山
Qin Hongzeng 秦红增
Qingchao 清朝
Qinghai minzu chubanshe
青海民族出版社
Qinghai minzu xueyuan
青海民族学院
Qinghai 青海
Qingzang gaoyuan 青藏高原

Ren 人
Renzi 人子

Sala 萨拉
Sanjiangyuan 三江源
Sanmucai 三木才
Shengxiao 生肖
Sichuan 四川
Sounan Caidan 索南才旦
Sun Yong 孙勇
Sunan Yuguzu Zizhixian
肃南裕固族自治县
Suoduanzhi 索端智

Tang 堂
Tiananmen 天安门
Tianjun 天峻
Tianzhu 天祝
Tongde 同德
Tongren 同仁
Tu 土族

Wandai Cairang 完德才让
Wande Kaer 万德卡尔
Wang Minggang 王明钢
Wang Qilong 王启龙

Wang Xiaodong 王小东
Wang Yao 王尧
Wencheng gongzhu 文成公主
Woesser 唯色
Wu Chongzhong 吴从众
Wulan 乌兰
Wusi yundong 五四运动
Wuwei 武威

Xiahe 夏河
Xiangji Zhuoma 祥吉卓玛
Xibei minzu daxue zangxue xi
西北民族大学藏学系
Xide nima 西德尼玛
Xihai 西海
Xihaizhen 西海镇
Xin qingnian 新青年
Xin wenhua yundong 新文化运动
Xing Haining 邢海宁
Xinghai 兴海
Xining 西宁
Xiongdi 兄弟

Xizang shehui kexueyuan
西藏社会科学院
Xunhua 循化

Yang Qingfan 杨清凡
Yu Xiangwen 俞湘文
Yu Jie 余杰
Yu Keping 俞可平
Yu Shiyu 于式玉
Yuan 元
Yunnan 云南
Yushu 玉树

Zang 脏
Zang 藏
Zeku 泽库
Zhangla qu 章腊区
Zhou Daming 周大鸣
Zhouqu 舟曲
Zhuoni 卓尼
Zu guo 祖国
Zuodannu 佐丹奴

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